Report on 2026 Business and Human Rights Conference in Tokyo

Date: Friday, October 23, 2026, 10:00-17:00 (JST)

Venue: Online (Zoom Webinar)

Hosts: Caux Round Table Japan

In cooperation with:
ANA HOLDINGS INC., JP Research & Consulting, Inc., Ajinomoto Co., Inc., Regrit Partners Inc.
Tokio Marine & Nichido Fire Insurance Co., Ltd., Tokio Marine dR Co., Ltd.
Morinaga Milk Industry Co., Ltd., Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha (NYK Line)
Mazda Motor Corporation

Overseas Organizations:
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA), Ethical Impact, RFP Advisory Services

Participants:
93 people in total (46 companies and 11 organizations; excluding CRT Japan staff)

Host — CAUX ROUND TABLE

In cooperation with — ANA, Ajinomoto, morinaga, NYK LINE, mazda, JPR&C Research&Consulting, Regrit Partners, TOKIO MARINE, Tokio Marine dR Co., Ltd.

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Overview

On Friday, October 23, 2026, Caux Round Table Japan (CRT Japan) held the 15th Business and Human Rights Conference in Tokyo. The conference brought together 93 participants from 46 companies and 11 organizations, including business practitioners and experts from Japan and abroad.

Since the UN Human Rights Council endorsed the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in 2011, human rights-related legislation, including laws covering supply chains, has accelerated worldwide. Since 2025, regulation has swung between tightening and easing, against the backdrop of the rollback of sustainability-related policies under the Trump administration in the United States, the omnibus legislative proposals in Europe, and growing concern that heavier compliance burdens undermine corporate competitiveness. Nevertheless, this has not diminished the importance of corporate efforts toward a sustainable society. On the contrary, stakeholders increasingly expect companies to go beyond compliance and desktop research, to embed respect for human rights in business continuity planning (BCP) and corporate strategy, and to carry out effective human rights due diligence (HRDD).

The morning session addressed the theme of "Protecting Migrant Workers' Rights," with case presentations by Japanese companies and a deep-dive session with supply chain stakeholders. The afternoon began with case presentations on "Ensuring Effectiveness in Human Rights Due Diligence," followed by a briefing from the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) on its new assessment methodology, the Integrated Transition Assessment (ITA); a panel discussion drawing on the Taskforce on Inequality and Social-related Financial Disclosures (TISFD), living wage, and living income; and presentations by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Through these discussions, participants reaffirmed the importance of senior management commitment, company-wide implementation structures, continuous engagement with rights-holders, integrated operation of HRDD and grievance (remedy) mechanisms, and "Shared Responsibility" across entire supply chains.

■Opening Remarks

Hiroshi Ishida, Executive Director, Caux Round Table Japan

Hiroshi Ishida, Executive Director of CRT Japan, opened the conference by explaining its purpose. Mr. Ishida stressed the importance of substantive HRDD, engagement with rights-holders, and the integrated operation of HRDD and grievance mechanisms(remedy). He also introduced the experts invited from overseas, expressed his expectation that they would share global perspectives and the latest developments, and stressed the need to extend these efforts beyond individual companies to mutual learning and collaboration across industries and regions.

■Corporate Initiatives/ Theme 1: Protecting Migrant Workers' Rights

The key to realizing respect for the rights of foreign workers lies in listening directly to the voices of the affected parties (rights-holders) and addressing structural risks such as recruitment-related fees, across the

entire supply chain. Through leading corporate case studies and multi-stakeholder dialogue, this session explored effective, collaborative approaches toward responsible recruitment, employment, and access to remedy.

Nami Ohno, Assistant Manager, Planning group, Sustainability Promotion Department, Sustainability Division, Morinaga Milk Industry Co., LTD.

Morinaga Milk Industry has set "Respect for Human Rights and Enhancement of Well-being" as a materiality in its "Sustainability Medium- to Long-Term Plan 2030." Following revisions to its Human Rights Policy in 2022 and 2026, the company conducts risk assessments covering its business sites and operations. It focuses on three priority areas (procurement, manufacturing, and logistics) and conducts human rights impact assessments, including on-site interviews, with priority suppliers. The company has also joined the Japan Center for Engagement and Remedy on Business and Human Rights (JaCER) and established an internal reporting system, the "Morinaga Milk Helpline," to build its grievance mechanisms and promote sustainable procurement.

Yoshiyuki Asada, Program Manager, Corporate Services Division, Mazda Motor Corporation

Mazda promotes HRDD in collaboration with CRT Japan under a project overseen directly by its Board of Directors. Based on a human rights risk assessment of its entire value chain, it has prioritized occupational safety and health (including for foreign workers), raw material procurement, and AI-related services. For domestic suppliers and dealerships, it conducts impact assessments that combine management self-assessments with QR-code surveys of foreign workers and on-site direct dialogue, both carried out by CRT Japan as a third party. Measures implemented so far include multilingual safety signage, prayer spaces, and improved living conditions. During FY2026, Mazda plans to extend the assessments to its operations in Thailand and to Tier 1 suppliers.

Hiroki Takase, Chief Manager, Regional Co-Creation Management Office, Regional Co-Creation Business Group, Yamaguchi Financial Group, Inc.

Noting the human rights risks in the working conditions of the rapidly growing number of foreign workers in its operating regions (Yamaguchi, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka), Yamaguchi Financial Group, as a regional financial institution, supports its clients' efforts to respect human rights. Recognizing the potential negative impacts on the environment and human rights of the activities of its investees and borrowers, the group worked with Tokio Marine and CRT Japan to conduct a human rights impact assessment on foreign workers (a pre-survey questionnaire and interviews with the workers concerned) at one client company. Going forward, it plans to work with regional support networks, including supervising organizations, local governments, Japanese-language institutions, and NPOs, to promote the sustainable development of a multicultural, inclusive society.

Shin Horiuchi, Deputy General Manager, Global / Future Mobility Strategy, Business Promotion Dept., Tokio Marine & Nichido Fire Insurance Co., Ltd.

Tokio Marine & Nichido, in partnership with Tokio Marine Resilience and CRT Japan, provides HRDD

consulting to corporate clients based on the UNGPs. Citing stricter regulation such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), growing shareholder proposals from activist investors and requests from investors, and tighter supplier audits by European automakers, Mr. Horiuchi stressed the importance of impact assessments that listen directly to rights-holders rather than relying on desktop research alone. The company provides end-to-end support, from identifying human rights risks and taking preventive, mitigation, and corrective measures to supporting disclosure. It positions HRDD not merely as a risk-avoidance measure but as an important management process for continuing to be a "company of choice" for business partners and society.

■ Deep-dive session: Building Supply Chains That Respect the Human Rights of Migrant Workers in Japan

Labour unions, sending organizations, supervising organizations and registered support organisations, receiving companies, and brand holders came together to share their initiatives and concerns regarding responsible recruitment and employment of foreign workers. A subsequent panel discussion explored possibilities for collaboration on prevention, remediation, and access to remedy.

Ippei Torii, Co-chair of the Board, Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan

Noting the sharp rise in the number of technical intern trainees and Specified Skilled Workers, Mr. Torii denounced the human rights violations under the Technical Intern Training Program, including low wages, forced repatriation, power harassment, and human trafficking, that have persisted structurally for about 30 years. With the transition to the Employment for Skill Development System in 2027 in view, he called for strict enforcement of the Labor Standards Act and the principle of equality between labour and management. Based on the Dhaka Principles for Migrant Worker Responsible Recruitment, he called for Zero Recruitment Fees for workers and clear accountability of prime contractors in supply chains.

Ken Kimura, Vice President, LPK Gunamandiri

LPK Gunamandiri has sent more than 4,000 technical intern trainees to Japan in total. Mr. Kimura described its pre-departure education (a six-month residential program including N4-level Japanese-language and etiquette instruction) and its measures to protect trainees from predatory loans and unscrupulous brokers: staff ask trainees how they plan to fund their costs and screen them, guiding them to legitimate loans from partner banks. He pointed out that the burden of pre-departure costs itself creates repayment pressure after arrival in Japan (a risk factor for absconding) and proposed reducing the burden on workers through employer payment and public subsidies. He also introduced a package of preventive and remedial measures: an assurance that workers will not be sent home for seeking help, consultation in workers' native languages, and protective shelters. He expressed the organization's intention to shift from a "sender of workers" to a "partner that protects the human rights and economic independence of technical intern trainees."

Kazumasa Fukazawa, Department Manager, Association Assist

Assist Cooperative began its human rights work in 2018, after a consultation from a receiving company

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that does business with a foreign-affiliated manufacturer. Mr. Fukazawa explained that although supervising organizations are legally third parties under Japanese law, they receive supervision fees from receiving companies, and this structural conflict of interest makes it difficult for them to function as fully independent consultation channels in trainees' eyes. In response, the cooperative has eliminated worker-borne costs from the recruitment stage, refunded fees charged after arrival, and introduced CRT Japan's multilingual app "Ninja," through which it has resolved all of the several dozen consultations it has received. He also explained that about 50% of supervision fees go to support not required by law, such as accompanying trainees to hospitals, pregnancy and childbirth support, and year-end tax adjustment assistance, effectively serving as a "second HR department."

Hideki Tanaka, General Manager, ESG Promotion Office, Tomoku Co., Ltd.

Mr. Tanaka presented a case in which a foreign-affiliated customer, during a factory audit, instructed Tomoku to reimburse recruitment-related fees that technical intern trainees had paid in their home countries. Based on documents such as the fee statements in the trainees' training plans, the company identified a risk of debt bondage, formulated "Regulations on Recruitment-Related Fees for Migrant Workers," and revised its transaction agreements. He cited as challenges the risk of early resignations during reimbursement, the difficulty of accounting for fees without receipts, and the process of explaining the issue to senior management and gaining their agreement.

Junji Orihashi, Manager, Human Rights & Social Impacts Team, Sustainability Department, Fast Retailing Co., Ltd.

Grounded in the "FR Way" corporate philosophy, international human rights norms, and its Human Rights Policy established in 2018, Fast Retailing regards respect for human rights as both a precondition for and an integral part of its business activities. Following the "Genba, Genbutsu, Genjitsu" principle (on-site, actual item, actual situation), the company understands conditions on the ground through dialogue with production partners, worker interviews in third-party audits, and its own hotline, and requires refunds of improper fees and corrective action when problems are found. As a brand holder that owns no factories, it also helps small partner factories fund refunds by placing steady orders and sharing production plans early to stabilize their operations.

Panel Discussion among Presenters

Following the presentations, Shoichiro Ikebe (Executive Officer, Worlding Inc., and Advisor to CRT Japan) facilitated a panel discussion with the session speakers.

Participants shared the view that, in line with the Employer Pays Principle of the Dhaka Principles, the aim should be to ensure that workers do not bear recruitment-related fees. Candidates for Japan are required to meet higher educational standards than for other countries (such as six months of residential Japanese-language training) and to complete complex paperwork, which means substantial preparation costs for sending organizations. Japanese receiving companies, for their part, already bear considerable costs, including supervision fees. However, the fees paid directly to sending organizations cover only about one month's worth of costs, and the resulting shortfall ends up as costs and debt borne by workers.

One supervising organization proposed reviewing the content of supervision fees and using the savings to cover recruitment fees.

On remedy, speakers noted that workers often cannot seek help because they fear that their consultations with public agencies and similar channels will be disclosed to their employers. It is essential to give workers confidence that they will not be disadvantaged or dismissed for seeking help, and participants agreed on the need for multi-layered channels with guaranteed confidentiality, the use of third-party apps, and companies treating labour unions and NGOs as equal partners.

On collaboration among stakeholders, it was noted that, under the Dhaka Principles, some areas fall within each actor's direct influence while others require collaboration with other actors and institutions. Participants stressed the importance of cooperation among sending organizations, supervising organizations, receiving companies, brand holders, labour unions, and NGOs, from collecting workers' voices through to providing remedy, with strict protection of personal information.

Overseas expert Mr. Wilkins referred to the principle, based on the ILO definition, that recruitment fees and related costs should be borne by employers. He noted that, under the EU Forced Labour Regulation (FLR) and mandatory HRDD legislation, worker-paid recruitment costs are an indicator of forced labour risk, and that each company therefore needs a clear policy.

■ Corporate Initiatives (Continued)/ Theme 2: Ensuring Effectiveness in Human Rights Due Diligence

The key to effective HRDD lies not only in establishing systems but in building trust on a day-to-day basis and operating grievance mechanisms (reporting and consultation channels) as an integral part of HRDD. Drawing on concrete cases from leading companies, this session discussed how to put such operations on a systematic footing so that voices from the field lead reliably to early detection and resolution of issues.

Yuichi Suzuki, Deputy General Manager, Sustainability Group, Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha

Mr. Suzuki presented, in chronological order, how NYK Line handled an anonymous report about working conditions at a ship recycling yard in Bangladesh. (1) Immediately after receiving the report, the company consulted the relevant departments and CRT Japan, replied that an initial investigation would be conducted, and informally gathered information through on-site supervisors. (2) After a follow-up report with specific information about a worker injury accident, it decided to commission CRT Japan, as a third party, to carry out an on-site assessment. (3) Face-to-face interviews with all workers at the yard were conducted to verify the actual situation regarding concerns such as safety problems in work practices and unpaid overtime. (4) The company gave feedback to the yard's management and shared the importance of continuing human rights work.

Mr. Suzuki cited three factors behind the early response: the accumulation of day-to-day human rights activities, firsthand information from on-site supervisors, and face-to-face interviews conducted together with a third party. He also named the difficulty of setting key performance indicators (KPIs) as an operational challenge for HRDD as a whole. Society and investors look for qualitative change, such as improved working conditions at the company and its business partners (outcomes), but in supply chain

efforts, these depend on the partners' own actions. The challenge, therefore, is how to translate activities the company can manage itself (outputs) into KPIs that maximize those outcomes.

Shoichiro Ikebe, Executive Officer, Worlding Inc.

Mr. Ikebe presented an analysis of the large volume of consultations received from technical intern trainees over the past decade. About 40% concerned "daily life, health, and safety" in their private lives, showing that private-life problems account for a larger share than work-related issues. He also noted that cases in which trainees were the perpetrators were as numerous as those in which they were victims of human rights violations and stressed the importance of supporting independence and preventing trouble. He identified the biggest reason reporting channels go unused as the lack of a visible person on the other end. In operating the "Ninja" app, which Worlding has adopted, staff therefore introduce themselves face to face or online during the post-arrival orientation period and build trust by promising to "respond responsibly."

Miki Sueda, Corporate Sustainability, ANA Holdings Inc.

Ms. Sueda described ANA's implementation structure, in which more than 100 "ESG Promotion Leaders" placed in departments and group companies drive activities on the ground. Together with CRT Japan, ANA Holdings has built an annual cycle that operates HRDD and a grievance mechanism ("Ninja") as one. The cycle combines a system-based overview, multilingual and fully anonymous direct surveys, and face-to-face interviews based on the survey results, while making workers aware that they can consult through "Ninja" at any time, including via the surveys. She said that HRDD becomes effective when two wheels turn together: channels through which workers can raise concerns at any time, and outreach in which the company goes to workers to hear their voices through surveys and interviews. Identified risks and examples of improvement are also shared with all suppliers to raise preventive awareness and lift activities across the industry.

■ Briefing: WBA's New Assessment Methodology

Namit Agarwal, Head of Programme, World Benchmarking Alliance

Mr. Agarwal presented the background and framework of the Integrated Transition Assessment (ITA), WBA's new corporate assessment methodology. As climate change, nature, and human rights and social issues become increasingly interdependent, the ITA assesses, quantitatively and comprehensively, the time-bound transition plans of 2,000 of the world's most influential companies across three pillars: Climate, Nature, and Social. It requires both "horizontal integration," linking sustainability themes, and "vertical integration," linking internal functions such as climate, human rights, procurement, and corporate planning. The assessment is organized along three axes: Planning, which evaluates how commitments are translated into targets and strategies and the board's accountability; Implementation, which measures appropriate resource allocation and stakeholder engagement; and Performance, which evaluates year-on-year improvement and the improved reliability of grievance mechanisms. Under the Social pillar, he explained, the assessment covers improvements in the livelihoods of workers and communities, reduction of human rights risks, living wage guarantees, and a just transition amid AI and

technological change.

■ ***Panel Discussion: Exploring the Links Between Human Rights and Business Strategy—Drawing on TISFD, Living Wage and Living Income***

Ms. Chikako Miyata (ANA Holdings, Director of CRT Japan) said that, with the emergence of TISFD, themes once discussed separately (human rights, human capital, well-being, and inequality) are being brought together around "People," and that this is a good opportunity for companies to raise human rights from a compliance matter to a management strategy theme that contributes to corporate value creation. Ms. Yuko Tsutsui (NYK Line, Director of CRT Japan) stressed the importance of recognizing the interdependence of climate, nature, and society and building it into corporate management. She said that the "Sanpo-yoshi" spirit ("good for the seller, the buyer, and society"), a strength of Japanese companies, is highly compatible with valuing people, and that it is necessary to show with quantitative data that treating people appropriately directly raises productivity and corporate value.

On living wage and living income, Mr. Agarwal outlined international developments, including the landmark 2024 ILO agreement on the definition of a living wage and its inclusion as a requirement in EU directives. He noted that, among the 2,000 most influential companies selected by WBA, only 5% disclose paying a living wage (under 1% among Japanese companies). Mr. Ishida reported that dialogue with rights-holders in HRDD has shown living wages to be roughly 1.3 to 2 times minimum wages. Mr. Ishida and overseas expert Mr. Rishi Sher Singh then presented a living wage assessment conducted at seafood processing sites and other workplaces in India as part of a Japanese company's HRDD. Going beyond the collection of numerical data, the assessment included a dialogue process in which workers themselves charted their monthly expenses (food, housing, medical care, education, and so on) in pie charts. This allowed workers to see their own costs visually and let the company grasp concretely the benefits and allowances genuinely needed on the ground.

Mr. Wilkins warned that, using wage increases as a selling point, agents in sending countries may market jobs as "high-paying," driving up recruitment-related costs (that is, debt) for workers, and that wage increases must therefore be paired with the Employer Pays Principle.

Ms. Tsutsui argued that raising wages and ensuring fair transactions cannot be achieved by a single company or industry alone and require rule-making and collaboration across government and industry (Shared Responsibility). Ms. Miyata stressed the importance of recognizing how much a company's business depends on "people" and of presenting investment in suppliers' workers to management as a necessary decision for building a resilient supply chain. Citing the "Know it, Show it, Act on it" approach set out at another international conference on living wage and living income, Mr. Ishida emphasized the importance of moving through these steps one by one, with sincerity.

■ **Presentations by International Organizations**

Representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presented on how international standards such as the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct are promoting sustainable corporate conduct and driving change.

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Mauricio Lazala Leibovich, Chief, Business and Human Rights Section, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Noting that 2026 marks the 15th anniversary of the UNGPs, Mr. Lazala Leibovich stated that respect for human rights is not merely a matter of legal compliance but a core management theme for building a sustainable and resilient economy. He traced the progress of National Action Plans from 2011 to 2020 and the acceleration of HRDD legislation in Europe and elsewhere from 2020 to 2025 and said that from 2026 the "awareness-raising" stage is over and the focus has moved to "effectiveness and results." HRDD, he pointed out, is not a paper-based procedure but a process of meaningful dialogue with rights-holders such as workers, local communities, and indigenous peoples. He presented four priority areas going forward: (1) integrating HRDD across the whole business, (2) meaningful dialogue with rights-holders, (3) assessing quantitative outcomes, and (4) strengthening grievance mechanisms. He also reported that OHCHR has launched a free "Business and Human Rights Helpdesk" for governments, businesses, and civil society.

Barbara Bijelic, Head of Regulation and Standards, Centre for Responsible Business Conduct, OECD

Ms. Bijelic presented the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (established in 1976 and updated in 2023), the grievance function of National Contact Points (NCPs), and the 2018 Due Diligence Guidance, which serves as the practical operational framework. Citing an OECD survey of adhering countries and large listed companies, she noted that advanced economies in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, have made progress in disclosing human rights and environmental policies and governance arrangements. Disclosure of concrete actions to prevent, mitigate, and remediate adverse impacts in supply chains, of the content of grievance mechanisms and remedial measures, and of stakeholder dialogue, however, remains limited.

Kana Murai, Junior Policy Analyst, Centre for Responsible Business Conduct, OECD

Ms. Murai explained the OECD "Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible AI," published in February 2026. She described it as common intergovernmental guidance covering the entire value chain: not only companies that develop and use AI, but also suppliers of the data workers who process and create the data AI requires, investors, and infrastructure providers such as data centre and semiconductor companies. The guidance addresses the working conditions and human rights risks of data workers, as well as the environmental impacts of AI infrastructure, such as power and water consumption.

Discussion among Speakers

The discussion that followed focused on how to turn international norms into effective results on the ground. Addressing the gap between international standards and the practical capacity of local suppliers in Asia and elsewhere, Mr. Singh stressed the importance of "hands-on support" from large companies, capacity building, and continuous education and dialogue, rather than imposing requirements and audits.

Ms. Bijelic and Mr. Lazala Leibovich pointed to the support mechanisms for SMEs and suppliers built into the EU CSDDD and similar laws, and to the importance of aligning the legislation emerging in each

country with international standards. It was also suggested that, as legal frameworks become more standardized, companies will be able to respond to domestic and overseas regulation with a single common approach, reducing multiple audit burdens and concentrating resources on the ground.

The discussion then turned to grievance mechanisms (remedy). Many companies tend to reject or avoid reporting channels as something that increases litigation and reputational risk. Mr. Lazala argued that the essence of such channels is to serve as an "early warning system" that detects human rights abuses and safety risks in advance. By detecting, addressing, and remedying problems while they are still minor, he stressed, grievance mechanisms prevent serious accidents, huge litigation costs, and brand damage, and should be used as a strategic tool to protect corporate value and business sustainability.

■ Closing Remarks

Hiroshi Ishida, Executive Director, Caux Round Table Japan

In his closing remarks, Mr. Ishida confirmed that, even amid a complex international situation and regulatory landscape, the UN Guiding Principles and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises remain the starting point for everything and reaffirmed the importance of continuing to respond to them in good faith. He stressed that effective HRDD goes beyond desk work and paper-based assessments: it means listening to rights-holders on the ground and operating HRDD and remedy mechanisms as two wheels of the same vehicle. He also noted the need to evolve toward comprehensive due diligence that covers environmental, climate, and AI risks as well as human rights. Finally, he underscored that structural challenges such as worker-borne recruitment costs for foreign workers and living wages must be tackled with a spirit of "Shared Responsibility" among governments, industry, companies and organizations across supply chains, labour unions, and NGOs, and closed the conference.

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