It is clear that we stand at crossroads in the debate about business, human rights, and accountability. There is growing acceptance that companies should respect the rights set out in the International Bill of Human Rights. The heated debate in recent years, however, has been over how to ensure that companies are responsible and accountable. This has become the acute issue, as the Wettstein and Waddock article explains very clearly. Are voluntary initiatives by companies enough? Do we need greater obligation, in the form of a set of binding international legal standards aimed at business? The international debate on these questions has become polarized, especially over the United Nations Norms on the Responsibility of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights (the Norms on business and human rights) drafted in 2003 by experts in the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Wettstein and Waddock are correct in arguing that the question is not whether we need voluntary or mandatory standards, but rather what mix of the two is needed. Voluntary initiatives are needed to encourage the increasing number of enlightened businesses to incorporate human rights principles into the core of their business thinking. However, some form of mandatory rules, whether national and/or international, are also needed to hold accountable those companies that flagrantly violate human rights or are complicit in serious abuses – often crimes – carried out by governments or armed groups or other companies.

I have set out elsewhere seven reasons why I, and the International Commission of Jurists, see no alternative but to move gradually towards developing a set of legally binding rules, a set of global standards about the ways in which companies are re-

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