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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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This issue of *China Rights Forum* focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR), its potential, and its impact on human rights in the face of domestic reform challenges and globalization dynamics. The CSR resource list in this issue provides a window into the proliferation in China of discussion, websites, books and other resources dealing with CSR (or RBC—“responsible business conduct”—another term used in China). While the presence of CSR-related activities and discussions appears to be growing, it is not clear whether Chinese or foreign companies fully understand CSR concepts and frameworks, or their implications for business practice and policies in China. Additional challenges are presented when the government itself lacks transparency and accountability and struggles with widespread corruption. Under such circumstances, how can companies be transparent, accountable, and responsible? In China, where many “private” companies are in fact controlled or owned by economic or political elites, and public companies are at an early stage of their evolution, can companies do well and do good? Can they make a profit and make a difference? What is the role and relationship of different stakeholders, including civil society actors, in a system that does not tolerate or allow independent critical voices?

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The first section, “CSR in Context”—with pieces from Christine Bader and Scott Greathead, and an interview with Michael Posner—examines the international development of CSR concepts, initiatives, and trends, and begins to map the CSR issues emerging in China. In the second section, “CSR with ‘Chinese Characteristics,’” Wei Ziyou, Hu Kunming, Jiang Fuzhen, Jing Chu, Dong Yuan, Qiao Xinsheng, and Evan Anderson examine the significant human costs of the “free market” in China, and highlight the challenges presented to both companies and the government by China’s rapidly developing economy. Ghislain Legault presents the view from Gabon as well, where Chinese companies have had significant negative impact on the environment, invoking broader concerns about cross-border social and economic impacts on local communities. Finally, the third section, “Resilience and Resistance,” captures the personal sacrifices and firm resolve of individuals who are faced with imprisonment of loved ones (Zhang Qing), returning to China after 13 years of exile (Wang Ai), organizing Tibetan protest (Tenzin Dorjee and Tendon Dahortsang), and advocating on behalf of rights defenders (interview with Teng Biao).

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This issue also introduces some exciting new features, including a revised news roundup that focuses on trends and developments linked thematically to each *CRF* issue focus; a timeline of case updates; and “Culture Matters,” a revamped cultural review section. Additionally, this issue’s Take Action section links to HRIC’s Incorporating Responsibility 2008 Campaign, introducing the campaign’s monthly highlight cases for January, February, and March—journalist Shi Tao, blind barefoot lawyer Chen Guangcheng, and petitioner Mao Hengfeng—and the broader human rights issues these cases reflect—media freedom, rule of law, and the right to petition and criticize the government. We also hope that you like the newly redesigned cover!

In the final lead-up to the Olympics, the business and international communities, governments and individuals alike, have the opportunity to urge Beijing to step up to its human rights challenge, and show the world it is a responsible international actor, prepared to host the Games. —**Sharon Hom**