



**ASN Bank Issuepaper**

**Human rights**

**Executive Summary**

Working towards

a just world for

for all

# ASN Bank Issuepaper

## Human rights

November 2011

### Summary

ASN Bank's sustainability policy centres on three focus areas: human rights, climate change and biodiversity. Before we approve an activity, we first assess to what extent it meets our sustainability criteria in these three areas. We do so for our investments, and we do so for our own operational management.

The ASN Bank Issue Paper on Human Rights describes the criteria we use to assess our activities with respect to human rights. We reviewed these criteria in 2011 following international developments concerning the work by John Ruggie. At the request of the United Nations he mapped out the responsibilities that businesses have regarding human rights. In June 2011 the UN Human Rights Council adopted *the Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights* proposed by Ruggie. These principles pertain to both states and businesses.

#### Interested parties consulted through crowdsourcing

ASN Bank used crowdsourcing to gather opinions on and invite contributions to its renewed human rights policy.

On our website [voordewereldvanmorgen.nl](http://voordewereldvanmorgen.nl) ('for the world of tomorrow') we presented our customers and other interested parties with four dilemmas. These dilemmas concerned arms, child labour, supply chain policy, and the social aspects of large-scale energy projects. We used Twitter to invite a broad public to join the discussion. In the end we managed to reach some 140,000 Tweeters. Almost 3000 people visited [voordewereldvanmorgen.nl](http://voordewereldvanmorgen.nl), and we received 115 substantive responses. The event culminated in a general meeting at the ASN office on 27 September 2011. All together this produced a wealth of input that helped us refine our policy.

#### Leading principles of our human rights policy

The leading principles of our policy are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international standards that are directly or indirectly derived from it. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, special treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Guiding Principles formulated by Ruggie. We elaborate these standards into criteria that help us make sustainable choices.

#### Criteria for companies

We differentiate between general human rights criteria and criteria for specific themes.

In general terms we ask: does a company have a policy in place concerning human rights? Does it respect human rights in practice?

The specific themes include: equal treatment and non-discrimination; no arms: we do not invest in arms or the arms trade; no child labour; workers' rights: no forced labour, safe and healthy working conditions, living wage and freedom of association; respect for privacy and freedom of speech; respect for the local community and indigenous people; protection of consumers.

#### No arms: Hewlett Packard (HP) and Dell

Following corporate takeovers, computer manufacturers HP and Dell became involved in the arms industry. HP took over the American company EDS, which supplies specialist communication technology and IT infrastructure for military purposes. Dell took over the American company Perot Systems, which is part of the Dutch Prognostic Health Management Consortium (PHM) for the Joint Strike Fighter program (JSF). The technology that the consortium supplies specifically for the JSF program has a military application only. Accordingly, both companies were excluded from the ASN investment universe.

Before examining a company we establish whether it is active in (high) risk countries or risk sectors. On the grounds of this analysis we determine the analysis category. We then test the company against the relevant criteria.

#### Criteria for countries

ASN Bank invests in countries through government bonds. We only invest in government bonds of countries that respect, protect and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We exclude countries that are responsible for gross human rights abuses. We also assess countries with respect to their policy and results regarding human rights. We identify how they perform in such areas as child labour, freedom of association, forced labour, discrimination, corruption and income distribution.

## ASN Bank's human rights policy also applies to our own operational management

### ASN Bank's operational management

ASN Bank's human rights policy also applies to our own operational management. In practice this means, for example, that we are transparent about what we do, that we treat our customers with respect, that we see employee satisfaction as an important indicator, and that we test our suppliers against sustainability criteria. Every year we report on these matters in our Annual Report and to various (international) organisations, including the UN Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

#### Example of supplier selection: Natural stone

ASN Bank's new office building is undergoing comprehensive renovation with a view to sustainability. The exterior façade is covered with natural stone. During demolition work, this natural stone was saved as much as possible for reuse, yet we nevertheless needed to purchase new natural stone. However, the mining of natural stone may go hand in hand with social malpractices, such as improper working conditions and sometimes even child labour. That is why we carefully selected our supplier of natural stone. We chose an Italian supplier. TAGIS, a project management agency, especially travelled to Italy to determine whether the supplier meets our sustainability criteria.

### Voting

We make use of the rights that we have as investor to vote at shareholder meetings.

### Taking position

Together with our customers we have settled on four sustainability themes: fair trade, against child labour, sustainable energy, and against the arms industry. We pursue and develop our social role on the basis of these themes.

### For more information

The Dutch version of the Issue Paper is available on our website: [www.asnbank.nl](http://www.asnbank.nl). For the English version of the Issue Paper or for more information you can contact [info@asnbank.nl](mailto:info@asnbank.nl).

### Other activities

Our sustainability policy not only forms the foundation for our assessment of activities, but also for:

### Dialogue

Our dialogue with companies (engagement) is an important means of addressing sustainability issues. In this way we seek to make companies and organisations more aware of the environment and human rights and to help them improve their performance in these areas.