

## JBCE-EBC-OECD joint event

Bridging Stakeholders and Business to Advance a Meaningful Dialogue:  
Japan–EU Cooperation for Responsible Business Conduct in Global Supply Chains  
February 25, 2026 Tokyo (Europa House)  
16:30-18:30(JST) / 08:30-10:30(CET)

### Executive Summary

The JBCE–EBC–OECD Joint hybrid event brought together about 80 representatives from business, government and international organizations and experts to discuss approaches for strengthening constructive dialogue with stakeholders—particularly civil society actors in Southeast Asia— around responsible business conduct with a focus on human rights issues. The session focused on sharing practical experiences aligned with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (OECD Guidelines) and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). The discussion also aimed to contribute to continuing dialogue grounded in the common values shared by Japan and the EU, including feeding into the Japan-EU Joint Dialogue with Civil Society under the Economic Partnership Agreement 2026.

#### 1. Approach to Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement

Companies recognised that meaningful stakeholder engagement, as defined in the OECD Guidelines and the UNGPs, is a **two-way, good-faith, responsive, and continuous process** through which business and stakeholders can openly exchange views and shape decisions affecting rightsholders and other stakeholders.

Effective engagement requires:

- **Mapping and prioritising affected rightsholders and other relevant stakeholders, including rightsholders’ representatives.**
- **Ensuring transparency and timely information-sharing.**
- **Building long-term trust during “normal times” and early in business engagement.**
- **Better understanding how the UNGPs’ involvement continuum “caused, contributed to, or is directly linked to harm” relates to stakeholder engagement.**
- **Integrating stakeholder input into human rights due diligence and remediation processes.**
- **Recognising the knowledge gap-** Differences in technical or policy backgrounds can sometimes make it difficult for all stakeholders to engage on equal footing.

Conducting stakeholder engagement increases legitimacy, strengthens human rights due diligence, and enables more credible and effective remedies.

#### 2. Practical Challenges Identified by Companies

Companies highlighted several practical challenges in implementing meaningful stakeholder engagement, including:

- **Empowering workers to speak up**—particularly at risk, vulnerable or marginalised groups such as foreign migrant workers—to raise concerns, even when grievance channels exist.
- **Identifying legitimate rightsholder representatives** and managing situations where some parties

may not engage in good faith, in some cases jeopardising trusted dialogue and rights-based solutions.

- **Balancing transparency with risks** such as legal exposure or intensifying criticism with associated reputational harm, which can make disclosure decisions complex including because of wide-ranging internal views.
- **Navigating differing expectations** and communication approaches between companies and stakeholders including civil society organisations.
- **Addressing internal coordination** within firms.

Participants recognised that stakeholder engagement tends to be far easier in home countries, whereas entering new markets requires extensive efforts to understand the context and which stakeholders may need to be prioritised. Stakeholder mapping and relationship building during “**normal times**,” before any crisis emerges is necessary. Effective stakeholder engagement in some cases requires **neutral mediators** who are trusted by both companies and rightsholders and their representatives, particularly when challenges or tensions arise.

### 3. Next Steps

#### For Companies

- **Continuous stakeholder mapping and relationship building**, especially with rightsholders and civil society organisations, including local groups.
- **Strengthening internal awareness and governance** so that different departments, including senior leaders, understand the value of stakeholder engagement and take early action
- **Building capacity for constructive dialogue**, including cross-cultural communication, sharing information on corporate governance and how that might impact decision-making time-frames and the ability to work with independent mediators where necessary.

#### For Governments and International Organisations

- **Creating structured dialogue platforms in host countries**, by playing a critical role as conveners, to companies and civil society to identify shared goals and build trust.
- **Providing capacity building and practical tools**, including encouraging training for, and access to, more neutral facilitators, guidance on stakeholder engagement for different types of human rights challenges and information on vulnerable groups.
- **Strengthening enabling environments**, coordinated policy dialogue and collaboration among governments, companies, and civil society, with recognition of shared responsibility, are essential to fostering responsible business conduct and to achieving more sustainable and resilient value chains.

This meeting demonstrated that Japanese and European companies share common values and a strong commitment to responsible business conduct. The event concluded with participants reaffirming these shared principles and further emphasising that sustained and structured Japan–EU dialogue—grounded in open, practical, and institutionalized engagement among business, government, and civil society—remains essential for advancing these common objectives.