

DALIT SOLIDARITY NETWORK UK

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POLITICIANS, BUSINESS LEADERS AND ACADEMICS UNITE TO COMBAT CASTE DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH ASIA

Baroness Royall, Government spokesperson for DFID in the House of Lords, Richard Stockdale, CEO of Lloyds TSB India, Professor John Harriss of LSE and Rob Marris MP were among those launching the Ambedkar Principles on 20th July at LSE. Baroness Royall indicated she has been on quite a steep learning curve in relation to the effects of caste-based discrimination and complimented the Dalit Solidarity Network on raising public awareness. She said DFID was committed to doing all it could to address the caste issue, both in South Asia and elsewhere.

The Ambedkar Principles are a set of guidelines that can help companies develop affirmative action plans that can increase access to employment for a large pool of untapped talent that has been undervalued and denied basic opportunities by centuries of discrimination and repression. Rob Marris MP who is a member of the House of Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee, urged India's foreign investors to tackle caste-based discrimination. He said that the recent Trade and Industry Select Committee Report has strongly recommended that the government urge companies to adopt the Ambedkar Principles as a way forward in combating caste-based discrimination.

The Seminar was organised by the Dalit Solidarity Network UK who recently launched the report on Caste Discrimination in the UK. It was jointly sponsored by Lloyds TSB and the trade union AMICUS. Those present also included representatives of HSBC, Barclays, Standard Chartered, community groups, NGOs and Human Rights Organisations. Companies are being asked to participate in a pilot study of the Danish Human Rights and Business Project and the International Dalit Solidarity Network. This project is aimed at assisting companies to make an impact assessment of their policies and activities on Human Right and caste-based discrimination.

The seminar was chaired by Rodney Bickerstaffe, former General Secretary of UNISON and ended with a call to Government Departments, NGOs, companies, banks and others involved in South Asia to be leaders in the field and sign the Ambedkar Principles.

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Notes to Editor:

The Dalit Solidarity Network UK (DSN-UK) started in 1998 as a network of individuals, groups, movements and agencies working in solidarity with Dalit communities in India. Over the years it has expanded its vision to encompass people in all countries who are discriminated against on the basis of their Caste or work and descent. We lobby development and human rights bodies, governments and the corporate sector to listen to and answer grassroots needs.

