

## Five Things Sustainable Companies Do

UN Global Compact launches Guide to Corporate Sustainability: Shaping a Sustainable Future

(New York, 19 January 2015) – The UN Global Compact – the world’s largest corporate sustainability initiative – today released the Guide to Corporate Sustainability: Shaping a Sustainable Future. This new guide lays out the five defining features of corporate sustainability, which the Global Compact asks businesses to strive towards – looking at why each element is essential, how business can move forward and what the Global Compact is doing to help.

Corporate sustainability is imperative for business today – essential to long-term corporate success and for ensuring that markets deliver value across society. To be sustainable, companies must operate responsibly in alignment with universal principles and take actions that support the society around them. Then, to push sustainability deep into the corporate DNA, companies must commit at the highest level, report annually on their efforts, and engage locally where they have a presence.

To be sustainable, companies must do five things:

1. **Principled Business:** For any company, sustainability begins with operating with integrity – respecting fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. The Global Compact’s Ten Principles provide a universal language for corporate responsibility and a framework to guide all businesses regardless of size, complexity or location.
2. **Strengthening Society:** Sustainable companies look beyond their own walls and take actions to support the societies around them. Poverty, conflict, an uneducated work-force, and resource scarcity are also strategic issues for business success and viability. With business activity, investments and supply chains reaching all corners of the earth, companies know that they cannot thrive when the world around them is deteriorating.
3. **Leadership Commitment:** A company’s leadership must send a strong signal throughout the organization that sustainability counts. A public commitment by the chief executive, with support from the Board of Directors, is required to participate in the Global Compact. Leadership also means instigating action in key areas: Board ownership of the agenda; adjustments to policies and practices; alignment of government affairs; training and motivating employees; pushing sustainability into the supply chain; and disclosing efforts and outcomes.
4. **Reporting Progress:** As a chief accountability measure, Global Compact participants are required to produce an annual Communication on Progress (COP), typically included as part of their sustainability or annual report, providing the company’s stakeholders with an account of their efforts to operate responsibly and support society. Over 28,000 COPs can be found on the Global Compact website
5. **Local Action:** Companies exist and act within nations and communities with varied expectations of what responsible business means. Additionally, the types of issues a company faces and how it can actively support local and national priorities ranges greatly. To help business navigate sustainability on the ground, Global Compact Local Networks in more than 85 countries support business participants – by fostering learning, reporting, networking, partnerships and advocacy – all with the goal of advancing sustainability understanding and performance country by country.

With over 8,000 companies and 4,000 non-business participants in over 160 countries, the UN Global Compact is helping companies, whether beginners on the sustainability journey or recognized champions, to meet their commitments to operate responsibly and support society. To learn more, download the Guide to Corporate Sustainability at

[www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/guide\\_to\\_corporate\\_sustainability.html](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/guide_to_corporate_sustainability.html)

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