

News Note



Children's Rights are at the heart of 'Business'

NEW YORK/ LONDON, 5 May 2011 - UN Global Compact, UNICEF and Save the Children are inviting businesses to take an active role in developing a global standard of business principles pertaining to children's rights. Through an online consultation process, which is launched today, representatives of the private sector can help shape the Children's Rights and Business Principles, which aim to set the standard for child-friendly businesses everywhere. At the same time, leading business and civil society representatives are meeting in London for the first of a series of global consultations.

"Sustainability at its heart is about inter-generational accountability, how we prepare the world for our children and theirs in turn. Business has a key role to play in operationalizing this in how they value and manage their impact on children's lives, today," said Simon Zadek, Senior Fellow, JF Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

The Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBP), to be launched this November, will be the first comprehensive set of principles to guide companies on the full range of actions they may take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children's rights.

The private sector can make an important contribution towards the realization of child rights not only through its own practices and policies, but also by using its influence to change attitudes, policies and institutions.

This timely initiative addresses a void in children's rights, and also reflects a rising interest within the corporate sector to move beyond the "do no harm" mentality and help foster child-friendly environments within stronger, more resilient communities. Aside from the moral imperative of protecting children, the principles also make good business sense.

"While the culture of corporate sustainability has broadened considerably in recent years, a child rights perspective is often absent during discussions regarding the human rights responsibilities of business," said Christopher L. Avery Director of the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, which is hosting the consultation.

Supporting the Children's Rights and Business Principles can help companies minimize material risks and discover new business opportunities. Research suggests that child-friendly policies and practices may be indicative of good corporate governance and better risk management - enhancing brand value, increasing employee satisfaction, driving consumer loyalty, and contributing to more sustainable value creation in the long term.

Intended to be a unifying point of reference for the impact of business activities on children, the Principles aim to cover a broad range of categories, including:

- respecting and protecting children's rights in the workplace and supply chain
- establishing family-friendly working conditions that support parents or caregivers
- ensuring that products and services to which children may be exposed are safe, don't impact children's lives negatively and are marketed in an ethical manner
- considering the impact of business activities on their surroundings, safeguarding the environment for future generations, and making sure business operations do not result in the displacement of communities

"The CRBP provides business with a principles-based framework and a practical pathway to become a beneficial force for children, maximizing their positive impacts and minimizing any negative impacts of their operations, products and marketing practices," added Zadek.

About the Children's Rights & Business Principles

The Children's Rights & Business Principles (CRBP) is a joint initiative by UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children to offer guidance to businesses on children's rights in the workplace and beyond. Based on extensive consultations with business and civil society stakeholders from all geographic regions the principles will enable the private sector to maximize positive impacts on children's lives by respecting and supporting their rights. The CRBP will be released in November 2011. Stakeholder participation in the consultation process is strongly encouraged. Please visit (<http://www.business-humanrights.org/>) for more information and to participate.

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