

## Overview

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan first proposed the Global Compact in an address to the World Economic Forum on 31 January 1999. The Global Compact's operational phase was launched at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 July 2000. The Secretary-General invited business leaders to join an international initiative — the Global Compact — that would bring companies together with UN agencies, labour and civil society to advance universal social and environmental principles.

Through the power of collective action, the Global Compact seeks to advance responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalisation. In this way, the private sector — in partnership with other social actors — can help realize the Secretary-General's vision: a more sustainable and inclusive global economy. Today, companies from all regions of the world, international labour and civil society organizations are engaged in the Global Compact. A voluntary corporate citizenship initiative, the Global Compact pursues complementary objectives:

- Making the Global Compact and its principles part of business strategy and operations;
- Facilitating cooperation among key stakeholders by promoting partnerships in support of UN goals.

The Global Compact is not a regulatory instrument — it does not “police”, enforce or measure the behavior or actions of companies. Rather, the Global Compact relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest of companies, labour and civil society to initiate and share substantive action in pursuing the principles upon which the Global Compact is based.

The Global Compact is a network. At its core is the Global Compact Office and six UN agencies: the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the United Nations Environment Programme; the International Labour Organization; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The Global Compact involves all the relevant social actors: governments, who defined the principles on which the initiative is based; companies, whose actions it seeks to influence; labour, in whose hands the concrete process of global production takes place; civil society organizations, representing the wider community of stakeholders; and the United Nations, the world's only true global political forum, as an authoritative convener and facilitator.

