

Global Compact Leaders Summit

Neville Isdell
Chairman and CEO, The Coca-Cola Company

Comments for Opening Plenary Session (as delivered)

7/5/07

Thank you for that kind introduction.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we meet here today, global business faces one of the most important questions of our time.

Are we a barrier to sustainability? Or are we the greatest hope?

The climate is changing.

Our supply of drinkable water is stressed.

The planet's biodiversity is threatened.

Conflict over resources is costing lives.

The global population is growing ... mainly in places least able to support millions of additional inhabitants.

The divide between the world's richest and poorest is a potential case of increased global conflict.

The time for abstract debate and hopeful assumption is gone.

Business must become agents of transformation.

We have the resources. We have the talents. And let's be clear here, we have the self-interest.

Real transformation brings to the table three non-negotiable demands.

- Speak up.
- Step up.
- And scale up.

Some very determined and eloquent voices have *spoken up* ... clearly ... and persuasively.

Business has *stepped up* ... with both promises and programs.

But if we add up all the great progress to date ... it's only a mildly encouraging start.

It's time to *scale up*.

It's time to leverage our efforts through concerted, coordinated, cooperative global action.

With the support and leadership of His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, the UN Global Compact gives us the structure and the focus to work together in ways that were difficult in the past ... but demanded by the future.

That is why The Coca-Cola Company signed.

That is why four of our largest bottling partners around the world ...CCE, FEMSA, CCHBC, SAB Miller ... have signed ... representing nearly half of our business globally.

That is why the CEOs of our seven bottling partners in Iberia are here with me today to add their commitments.

The UN Global Compact gives us the structure and the focus for collective action.

There are those who criticize the fact that the Compact is voluntary.

And, there are those who, unhappy with the rain, would legislate sunshine.

Governments can enforce accountability ... but not engender responsibility.

Responsibility is a choice.

The Global Compact allows us to make that choice ... with the world watching.

One pressing example of the need and power of scaling up is the fact that one billion of our fellow human beings lack access to safe drinking water and at the same time freshwater is a resource under growing stress around the world.

The Coca-Cola Company recently announced at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) annual meeting in Beijing that we are working to replace every drop of water we use in our beverages and their production to achieve balance in communities and in nature with the water we use ... this is just one example of how business can engage to make a real, positive and lasting difference in protecting and preserving freshwater resources.

We are also proud to be a founding partner, along with the United Nations Foundation, in the "Global Water Challenge ... an initiative that brings together companies, NGOs, Foundations and government agencies to scale up solutions to providing safe drinking water and sanitation.

The Coca-Cola Foundation recently provided an additional \$1 million of support to the Global Water Challenge to establish a platform for multi-industry collaboration and engagement on water. A small amount, no: the GWC will leverage this into +\$100 million additional funding.

The results of this collaboration are already evident. A drinking water, hygiene and sanitation program in Kenya, initiated in 45 schools by Coca-Cola a few years back, has grown through the Global Water Challenge to a \$10 million program that will eventually reach 1,500 schools in the poorest province of Kenya.

But we need more companies to get involved. Paul Faeth, the executive director of the Global Water Challenge, is here in Geneva, and his objective is to engage 50 additional companies to focus on water and sanitation issues around the world, to manage their own water better, to support the communities in which they are located, and to participate in the work of the Global Water Challenge. With every new company that engages with the Global Water Challenge, with every new action taken, the drumbeat gets louder until the problem is at the forefront of society's thinking, where it belongs.

The global scourge of water-borne illness is the focus of one of the Millenium Development Goals ... and tied directly to the "CEO Water Mandate", which we are pleased to support, and you will hear more about at this Summit.

We are also working to add our scale to the global imperative to reduce carbon emissions.

The world's water challenges will only worsen with climate change.

We have engaged our business in a concerted effort to drive energy efficiency in our manufacturing processes, our transportation fleet and in our refrigeration equipment ... we are making investments in renewable energy and reforestation...our goal is to grow our business, but not the carbon.

We are scaling up our commitment by supporting the Compact's "Caring for Climate" leadership statement ... which commits those who sign to CEO support ... strategic and operational change ... and public communication.

We are also proud to partner with the "Live Earth" concert two days from now in Johannesburg where we will add our voice to the global effort to raise awareness about global warming and push for scaling up action and solutions.

Our concern for the planet must also extend to the well-being of all those who share it.

For Coca-Cola, it begins with our Workplace Rights Policy and our Human Rights Statement... which ensure that every one of our 71,000 employees around the world is treated fairly and with dignity.

Both the Policy and the Statement express our commitment to the principles of the UN Global Compact.

We have also scaled up by joining the Business Leaders initiative on Human Rights ... which gives us the opportunity to both learn and lead.

In each of these examples, I think the pattern is clear.

First, we focus on change within our own company and without claiming perfection.

Then we connect what we achieve, and what we learn, with others doing the same.

It's a process that elevates intention to transformation.

We thank and congratulate the UN and Secretary General Ban for the vision and leadership that empowers the Global Compact.

It allows us to pursue that transformation in ways none of us could achieve on our own.

I'm an optimist by nature and a realist by experience.

I don't discount the size of the job ahead.

But neither do I discount the power of our collective innovation, resources and will.

We *will* change the world.

... because we *can* ... and because we *must*.

Thank you.

###