



# The CEO Water Mandate

## UN Global Compact CEO Water Mandate

### Overview of Priority Areas in 2011 and 2012

October 2011

The CEO Water Mandate currently conducts activities with respect to three primary focus areas/workstreams:

- 1) Responsible policy engagement and collective action,
- 2) Human rights and business, and
- 3) Corporate water disclosure.

The Mandate Secretariat encourages endorsing companies to participate in any and all workstreams and associated Working Groups in which they are interested. This document is meant to help endorsing companies understand the main objectives of these workstreams, to learn more about key projects associated with them, and to get involved in shaping the work as it unfolds.

### I. Responsible Business Engagement with Water Policy and Management

Acknowledging that water scarcity, pollution, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, and ineffective water management create risks for companies and governments alike, the Mandate released the [Guide to Responsible Business Engagement with Water Policy](#) in November 2010. This *Guide* provides principles, concepts, practical steps, and case examples that facilitate companies' responsible engagement with water policy in a manner that reduces business risks through the advancement of equitable and sustainable water management. Presently, the Mandate's activities related to policy engagement focus primarily on facilitating company's implementation of the *Guide's* principles and operational practices on the ground through the development of the *Water Action Hub* and location-specific collective actions projects.

The upcoming *Water Action Hub* will provide an online platform whereby companies communicate and partner with other businesses, relevant governments, NGOs, and communities to advance sustainable water management on a location-specific basis. It is slated to be fully operational by the end of 2012.

The Mandate is in the initial stages of collective action projects designed to foster and coordinate collective action among businesses, NGOs, the public sector, and other stakeholders. In Cambodia and Vietnam, the Mandate is coordinating a project in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme to improve corporate water management among apparel company suppliers (specifically Nautica, H&M, Levi, and Nike). The project's primary objectives are to:



- Drive operational water use efficiency and improved wastewater discharge among apparel companies' suppliers by sharing and implementing good water management tools and practices;
- Facilitate better communication among companies and their suppliers;
- Foster cooperative relationships among apparel companies and their stakeholders in the region to address shared water risks.

In South Africa, the Mandate is assessing the degree to which there is endorser company interest in collective actions that will contribute to improved corporate water practices and overall water management in specific watersheds so as to mitigate business' water-related risks and reduce water-related stress on communities and ecosystems.

These projects are overseen by the Mandate's Collective Engagement Working Group (CEWG).

## II. Water and Human Rights

In 2011, the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council agreed to resolutions affirming the human right to water and sanitation as a right equal to all other human rights. In response, the Mandate Secretariat has amended the initiative's [founding document](#) to acknowledge these resolutions. Further, Mandate endorsers and stakeholders alike have suggested an awareness that there is a corporate responsibility to conduct business operations consistent with the right to water. However, endorsers have also expressed a need for the Mandate to explore what it means in practice for a company to act consistently with this right and how to operationalize it on the ground.

The Mandate will help respond to this need by developing a *Guide to Aligning Business Practice with the Human Right to Water and Sanitation*—in collaboration with Oxfam America and with oversight from the Mandate's Human Rights Working Group (HRWG). The *Guide* will provide operational guidance that:

- Lays out background information and context for the human right to water and sanitation as it relates to business,
- Offers an operational framework for applying business human rights principles to water, and
- Provides insights and case examples regarding practical measures businesses can adopt to ensure their operations both respect and in relevant cases fulfill the right water and sanitation.

The development of the *Guide* will include a series of stakeholder dialogues and an empirical assessment of corporate practice. In preparation for this document, the Mandate has released a [white paper](#) summarizing current endorser and stakeholder perspectives on this issue.

## III. Corporate Water Disclosure

The Mandate disclosure workstream seeks to build businesses' ability to effectively communicate their efforts to be responsible water stewards to key stakeholders (i.e. affected communities, consumers, investors, and the general public). Such reporting increases corporate accountability for their actions and better allows stakeholders to inform and guide company practices.

In order to facilitate improved reporting, the Mandate is currently developing globally relevant *Water Disclosure Guidelines* – in collaboration with PricewaterhouseCoopers and with assistance from key strategic partners Carbon Disclosure Project, World Resources Institute, and Global Reporting Initiative.



This project will bring together and build on the experiences of water disclosure-related initiatives so as to advance a common approach to corporate water disclosure. This approach will 1) offer common corporate water disclosure metrics that can begin to harmonize practice and 2) provide guidance for determining report content relevance and aligning water disclosure to stakeholder expectations.

This work is overseen by the Mandate's Water Disclosure Working Group (WDWG).

### **How to get involved**

Mandate endorsers are invited to participate in these workstreams primarily through participation in the initiative's corollary working groups. To join one or more of the working groups, please contact Peter Schulte (Research Associate, Pacific Institute) at [pschulte@pacinst.org](mailto:pschulte@pacinst.org).

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