



## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS PRINCIPLES

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### Background Note

Developed by UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children – the Children's Rights and Business Principles (the Principles) will be the first comprehensive set of principles to guide companies on the full range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children's rights. While the business and human rights agenda has evolved significantly in recent years, a child rights perspective has not yet been sufficiently addressed.

The Principles are built on existing standards, initiatives and best practices related to business and children, and seek to fill gaps to present a coherent vision for business to maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative impacts on children. In doing so, the Principles help to elaborate both expectations of, and opportunities for business, in relation to children; who are frequently and often overlooked as stakeholders of business.

Recognizing the important contribution that business can make in shaping these Principles and ensuring their relevance to business operations, the partners launched an extensive multi-stakeholder consultation process involving business across sectors and geographies.

From April through July 2011, more than 600 business leaders, civil society and government representatives, key experts and children participated in face-to-face meetings that took place in 10 cities (New York, London, Copenhagen, Dubai, Shanghai, Beijing, Nairobi, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Geneva), or through online consultations. An online feedback channel was launched by the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre. Additionally, several thousand people were reached in the initiative's efforts to build awareness of the Principles in advance of their official release. The overall feedback has been positive, reaffirming the value of the initiative, while also providing many valuable suggestions.

The Principles are now finalized and will be released on 12 March 2012 in London, bringing together leading companies and experts to discuss and showcase ways in which business can respect and support children's rights in their core operations.

### About the Principles

Children's rights can very simply be defined as the most effective possible investment in our future. Human rights apply to all children. Safeguarding these rights helps build the strong, well-educated communities that are vital to creating a stable and productive business environment.

A business that integrates respect for children into its core mandate can strengthen development and sustainability, and generate real benefits for business as well. Positive action for children's rights can build a strong reputation, achieve better risk management and enhance the social licence to operate – gaining support from people who live and work where a business operates.

A commitment to children can help recruit and maintain a motivated workforce by supporting employees who are parents and caregivers, promoting youth employment and guaranteeing that the next generation has the skills a business needs to prosper.

The Principles recognize the tremendous positive power of businesses large and small, and seek to support the best business practices. The Principles call on the entire business community to evaluate and take responsibility for their impact on the well-being of children.

## **ACTIONS FOR BUSINESS**

Ten principles identify how businesses can respect and support children's rights through core business activities, strategic social investments and philanthropy, advocacy and public policy engagement, and through partnerships.

Principle 1 outlines the core actions to be taken in policy commitments, due diligence and remediation, and encourages all businesses to go beyond respect to the next steps of supporting and promoting children's rights.

The remaining nine Principles encourage business to implement these core actions by considering the impact on children of all their activities related to the workplace, marketplace, community and the environment.

Save the Children, UNICEF and the UN Global Compact hope they will serve as an inspiration and guidance for all businesses, everywhere, in their interactions with children.