

Global Compact Human Rights Working Group (HRWG)

Webinar Meeting Summary Report [Draft]

9 February, 2010, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Summary

- The purpose of this HRWG meeting was to advance the Good Practice Note (GPN) workstream of the HRWG.
- The Good Practice Note concept and process for endorsement were reviewed.
- Three GPNs were discussed: Stakeholder Panels, How Businesses Can Encourage Governments to Fulfil Their Human Rights Obligations, and Buyer Impacts in the Supply Chain.
- Authors of the GPNs agreed to edit the draft GPNs, considering both written feedback and feedback provided during the webinar. The revised versions will be circulated to the HRWG.
- Particular attention was paid to how the various GPNs can be made more consistent for branding purposes
- Preparations for the UNGC Leaders Summit 2010 were presented to the HRWG. Participants strongly noted that human rights did not currently receive adequate mention. The UNGC Leaders Summit website and materials have since been updated, taking into consideration comments received during the webinar.
- Plans were discussed for two future webinars to further different workstreams of the HRWG: Human Rights Policies and Reporting and Due Diligence

1. Welcome and introductions

Mary Robinson, chair of the webinar meeting, welcomed HRWG members and a number of observers from business and civil society to the meeting (see the participants list). Mary explained that the purpose of the webinar is to further the Good Practice Note (GPN) workstream of the HRWG by providing comments to GPNs that are close to completion and consideration for endorsement by the HRWG. Mary noted that the final session of the webinar meeting would be used to discuss the UNGC Leaders Summit 2010.

2. Good Practice Note Concept

Lene Wendland of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provided a brief introduction of the Good Practice Note Concept. She explained:

- In 2008, the HRWG decided that one of its functions would be to act as a “forum” for identifying good business practice in implementing the Global Compact human rights principles.
- Good practices may be practical solutions to commonly occurring dilemma situations or specific management practices proven to be helpful in enabling a company to respect and/or support human rights.
- Good Practice Notes explore specific responses to business and human rights dilemmas or common situations businesses encounter that can benefit from highlighting good practice. They are different than case studies, as they typically do not refer to any particular company, and different than human rights tools because they do not exist merely to give specific steps to follow although such steps may be referenced in the Good Practice Notes. Rather, Good Practice Notes draw on the experiences and lessons learned from many companies and stakeholders. The content

for the Note is obtained through a process that usually includes confidential interviews with a wide range of companies and other stakeholders.

3. Good Practice Note Sub-Working Group and Good Practice Note Endorsement Procedure

Chip Pitts, who heads the sub-working group on the development of Good Practice Notes, introduced the Sub-Working Group members: Monique Oxender (Ford), Cody Sisco (BSR), Dean Cycon (Dean's Beans), Lucy Amis (Business and Human Rights Expert), David Schilling (Interfaith Center for Business and Human Rights), Eileen Kauffman (SA3000), David Vermijs (Global Compact Local Network, Netherlands), Heather Grady (Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative), and Ravi Fernando (Sri Lanka Institute of Nanotechnology).

Chip also clarified the procedure by which Good Practice Notes are considered and endorsed by the HRWG:

1. Draft good practice notes, up for endorsement by the HRWG, will be circulated to the members approximately two weeks in advance of a HRWG meeting (in person or virtual). In most cases, good practice notes that are up for endorsement will have already undergone one, or more often multiple, rounds of consideration for feedback and comments by the Sub-Group on good practice notes, HRWG members more generally, and other relevant stakeholders.
2. HRWG members will be invited to provide any final comments during the meeting. Written comments will also be considered up to one week after the meeting.
3. After revisions have been made, the final good practice note will be circulated to members of the HRWG for their endorsement. Please note, at this stage, only formal (i.e. listed) members of the HRWG will be consulted. HRWG members will have 10 days to object to the endorsement of the good practice note.
4. If there are no objections within that time, the good practice note will be considered adopted.
5. Once a good practice has been endorsed by the HRWG, it will be posted on the Global Compact website at a dedicated link and will be part of the resources that the UN Global Compact recommends to companies.
6. If a member of the HRWG decides to object to the endorsement of the good practice note, they should provide a full explanation of their reason(s) for doing so that can be shared with the HRWG.
7. A sincere effort will be made to resolve all objections and to seek consensus on the final good practice note.
8. If the objections cannot be cleared, consideration will be given to whether the good practice note can be endorsed with any uncleared objections explicitly stated. However, the good practice note will not be endorsed if a third or more members have provided objections that were not able to be cleared.
9. If a good practice note is rejected following the procedure above, it may be considered for endorsement again once further revisions have been made or if sufficient objections are cleared to

enable requisite proportion of HRWG members to endorse the note following the same procedure described above.

For questions about the Sub-Working Group on the development of Good Practice Notes, or the Good Practice Note Endorsement Procedure, please contact Chip Pitts: chip.pitts@att.net

4. Stakeholder Panels

The first Good Practice Note, developed by Katharina Hermann explores the use of a Multi-Stakeholder Panel as a tool for effective stakeholder dialogue. Participants provided the following comments:

- Eileen Kaufman asked about the incentive for stakeholders to participate in a stakeholder panel and referred to capacity issues stakeholders may come across. She also wondered ‘who’ the GPN was aimed at. She urged the author to review the note with a view to include national companies as opposed to only multi-national companies as addressees of the note.
- A couple of participants suggested referencing existing practical guidance
- Luke Wilde urged the author to clarify how global vs. local stakeholders and rights-holders were addressed and how the voices of the most vulnerable were heard by stakeholder panels. He also asked for clarification regarding the intent of the note.
- Chris Jochnick suggested that it may be helpful to provide further explanation regarding the spectrum of the different multi-stakeholder mechanisms. He also asked the author to elaborate more on the conflict of interest issue thinking of the most vulnerable, i.e. setting up a blind trust.
- Desiree agreed with Chris on mapping out the spectrum of stakeholder panels and suggested including information on Human Rights Impact Assessments
- David Vermijs proposed that the document should be shortened, i.e. move some info into footnotes, since businesses are the main audience. He also recommended putting the advantages of stakeholder panels before talking about how those panels work. David suggested reframing the issue of time under the ‘pitfalls’ section of the note and to make it an issue of priorities. He also suggested reconsidering aspects of the section on transparency since transparency is not always the goal of stakeholder panels.

6. How Business Can Encourage Governments to Fulfil their Human Rights Obligations

The second GPN discusses ‘How Business Can Encourage Governments to Fulfil their Human Rights Obligations’, developed jointly by Lauren Gula and Nicky Black. Participants provided the following comments:

- A couple of participants mentioned that the current document is a bit long. A slightly shorter GPN may be more useful to companies.
- Participants questioned under what circumstances the guidance provided in the note was applicable. If the GPN is intended solely or mainly for companies operating in zones of weak governance, this should be communicated
- Eileen Kaufman proposed that there may be human rights issues and situations that warrant specific mention such as special economic zones, gender, forced labour and child labour.
- Participants agreed that referencing complementary resources and initiatives available to readers would be helpful. For instance, Eileen mentioned Amnesty International’s work on conflict zones.
- Inclusion of or reference to case studies to help contextualize GPNs was discussed. However, it was noted that there are a very limited number of case studies in the public domain that address government engagement by business.

7. Buyer Impacts on the Supply Chain

The final Good Practice Note by Cody Sisco of BSR discusses Buyer Impacts on the Supply Chain. The following comments were provided:

- Participants asked for clarification regarding the scope of the paper. The note should be clear that it is on relevant practices from a range of industries and that the target audience is multinational companies with supply chains that reach into developing countries.
- Participants suggested that the note state clearly that the good practices described are complementary to holistic supply chain sustainability programs (rather than a substitute) and most applicable to those companies that are advanced on the topic. The note should also state that it is intended to address the full range of human rights impacted by supply chains, not just labor standards.
- Participants asked that the note acknowledge challenges and pitfalls
- Participants asked that the note be more explicit when addressing the benefits of collaboration (shared cost, greater impact), and reference industry initiatives and multi-stakeholder initiatives (e.g. BSCI, EICC and AIAG, also Tirapur Steering Group and Switcher in India)
- Participants suggested that the author connect the human rights context and challenges with the practices, e.g. lack of power for workers can be directly addressed through better worker/management communications mechanisms.
- Participants suggested that a point be made about incentives for suppliers, e.g. recognition
- Participants suggested that worker empowerment be emphasized.
- Participants emphasized that the note should focus on details on practices that could provide concrete guidance to companies, instead of focusing on any particular branded initiative, and that including evidence of impact should be added to the note
- Participants questioned the references to specific named companies in the note and suggested including specific company names in reference to their practices in the GPN's footnotes if at all.

8. UN Global Compact Leaders Summit 2010

Jonas Haertle from the UN Global Compact Office led the HRWG through a brief presentation to update participants on plans for the 2010 UN Global Compact Leaders Summit, being held in NYC on 24-25 June. Slides from Jonas' presentation can be viewed by downloading the webinar PowerPoint presentation at: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/Meetings_and_Workshops.html

- Participants shared the concern that human rights was not adequately mentioned and did not seem to receive a sufficiently prominent role at the event. Since the webinar, materials for the Leaders Summit, as well as the Leaders Summit website, have been updated to reflect concerns expressed during the webinar. Please visit: <http://www.leaderssummit2010.org/>
- Kathryn Dovey mentioned a Human Rights breakfast for CEOs that is scheduled for the morning of 24 June, prior to the beginning of the Leaders Summit. The purpose of the breakfast will be to build interest and enthusiasm about human rights amongst CEOs in advance of the Summit.
- Jonas explained that a meeting will be held in NYC in March to discuss the "Blueprint for Sustainability Leadership". Working Group members will have an opportunity to provide comments on the Blueprint.

Editors Note:

The UN Global Compact Office can now confirm that John Ruggie has been invited to the Leaders Summit and has been offered a prominent speaking role in the second session – Leading the Change - on the topic of human rights. In the coming fortnight, additional speaking roles will be allocated.

9. Closing and Next Steps

Mary Robinson thanked participants for their contribution and reminded the HRWG that they are welcome to submit written comments to the authors of the Good Practice Notes up to ten days after the webinar. The Good Practice Notes currently up for endorsement by the Human Rights Working Group will be circulated for final consideration later this month. According to this timeline, they should be finalized by early April.

Plans for future webinars to advance different workstreams of the HRWG were mentioned:

1. Human Rights Policies and Reporting (March)
2. Due Diligence (late April)

The HRWG will be informed of details in due course.