



United Nations Global Compact



The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights:

Relationship to UN Global Compact Commitments

July 2011

On 16 June 2011, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed a set of Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for implementing the UN ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework (hereafter the UN Guiding Principles).

The UN Guiding Principles provide an authoritative global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity. They also provide civil society, investors and others with the tools to measure progress by business in meeting their responsibility to respect human rights.

The UN Guiding Principles are the product of six years of research and consultations led by the UN Special Representative on Business and Human Rights, Professor John Ruggie of Harvard University, involving governments, companies, business associations, civil society, affected individuals and groups, investors and others around the world.

Under the Principles relating to the ‘State Duty to Protect,’ governments’ existing obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights are reiterated, as is the importance of protection against human rights abuses involving business enterprises. The UN Guiding Principles make clear that States should carry out the duty to protect through effective policies, legislation, regulations and adjudication and that doing so provides greater clarity of expectations and consistency for business in relation to human rights.

The UN Guiding Principles establishes the ‘Responsibility to Respect’ as the minimum global standard on human rights for all business enterprises wherever they operate. It requires business enterprises to avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities. Where they have not contributed to the adverse human rights impacts, business enterprises should seek to prevent or mitigate impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships.

In order to be able to know and show that they meet their responsibility to respect human rights, business enterprises should have in place appropriate policies and procedures. This includes making a policy commitment to meet the responsibility to respect human rights, to exercise human rights due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how

they address their impacts on human rights, and engage in processes to enable the remediation of any adverse human rights impacts they cause or contribute to. The UN Guiding Principles outline the elements of these policies and processes. The tools and processes companies employ will vary with circumstances, including company size and sector of operations and with the severity of the enterprise's adverse human rights impacts. The responsibility to respect human rights exists independently of States' capacity or willingness to fulfil their own human rights duties.

The 'Access to Remedy' Principles focus on ensuring that where people are harmed by business activities, there is both adequate accountability and effective redress, judicial and non-judicial, including through effective operational level grievance mechanisms.

The Principles relating to the responsibility of business enterprises to respect human rights are of particular relevance to the commitment undertaken by Global Compact participants. Principle 1 of the Global Compact calls upon companies to **respect** and support the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and Principle 2 calls upon them to ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

As a global standard applicable to all business enterprises, the UN Guiding Principles provide further conceptual and operational clarity for the two human rights principles championed by the Global Compact. They reinforce the Global Compact and provide an authoritative framework for participants in implementing this commitment, including guidance on putting in place robust policies and procedures and communicating annually with stakeholders about progress.

These and other management actions business can take to respect and support human rights are illustrated in the poster available in all six official languages on the Global Compact website at (http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/Resources/HR_E_Framework_Poster_A2.pdf). Guidance materials that can help with implementation of the responsibility to respect (and the voluntary commitment to support) human rights can be found at: (http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/Tools_and_Guidance_Materials.html)

In addition to respect for human rights, participants in the Global Compact have committed to support the promotion of human rights, that is, to make a positive contribution to the realization of human rights especially in ways that they are relevant for their business. Such efforts can be through core business practices, social investment and philanthropy, and/or engagement in public policy and advocacy (http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/lead/Blueprint_english.pdf). They can be undertaken alone or in partnership with others.