

UK Network Update

It has been a full year for the UK Network of the UN Global Compact. We began by welcoming a new Chairman, Michael Spenley, head of corporate social responsibility at online clothing retailer Littlewoods, who replaced Anthony Sampson who helped launch the UK Network. To strengthen governance of the Network further, we also elected a Vice Chair, Deb O'Leary, founder of Forensic Pathways, which designs and supplies forensic products.

At a press conference held in March to promote the UK Network, Michael discussed his priority to enhance the vitality of the Network by building membership and exploring critical areas businesses face in implementing the ten UNGC principles.

Accordingly in April, the UK Network supported a meeting of East European Global Compact networks in London, which allowed UK Network to share how they are attempting to meet key corporate responsibility challenges.

Another highlight was a September outreach event in Edinburgh to advance the reach of The UK Network. In association with CIFAL Findhorn and the United Nations Institute of Training and Research, the two day event explored two important Global Compact issues, reducing carbon emissions (in particular, establishing a carbon baseline, grappling with carbon neutrality, low carbon technologies, and supply chain strategies) and doing business in difficult places (focusing on the challenge for business in maintaining responsible values, while operating in diverse cultural and regulatory frameworks around the world).

At steering group and full UK Network meetings in the year, our Working Groups have reported on their efforts in specific areas. The COP Working Group has been supporting members in producing clear Communications on Progress, these annual synopses of signatories' involvement with the principles is vital to the integrity of the Global Compact. The COP Working Group's mentoring programme involves peer review of member COPs. Nine COPs were reviewed in the year with three found fully compliant, four largely compliant with amendments, and two were judged non-compliant. Following feedback and advice, the two non-compliant members resubmitted their COPs and were both then found to be fully compliant.

The Communication Working Group has maintained the UK Network website at www.ungc-uk.net and helped promote UK Network initiatives; the SME Working Group has developed new guidance for SME signatories; the Network Liaison Working Group has provided outreach to 'New Europe' countries including Lithuania and Poland; and discussion is underway for a new supply chain working group.

Looking to the close of the 2007, UK Network members will be involved with the global network meeting in Monterrey, Mexico and discussion is underway on a December event with the UK Foreign Office on best practice reporting on human rights.

For more information about the UK Network, contact secretariat@ungc-uk.net.