

Global Compact Working Group on the Labour Principles

Purpose:

- To raise the profile, relevance of and respect for the four labour principles among Global Compact companies and networks.
- To help ensure a consistent approach is taken to the application and understanding of the four principles, drawing on ILO ITUC, IOE information and experience of them.
- To develop tools/ information exchange/ forums for Global Compact companies engagement on the four Labour principles.

Structure:

- Co-chaired by Antonio Peñalosa and Guy Ryder.
- Dedicated Secretariat/resource support from ILO (and IOE and ITUC when requested).
- Open participation to other Board members, interested companies and trade unions.

Initial areas for possible work:

- Preparation of practical material to guide companies on working towards the realization of the four principles. This would sustain the differentiation between the role of the State and the possible actions available to companies. Written in business language, this material could draw on ILO work on the 1998 Declaration Follow-up. It would contain information on what the principles mean for a company and some examples of how companies have worked towards their realization, etc.
- Supply chain. Working on tools to assist national companies, especially in the developing world, understand how engagement on the labour principles can better equip them to participate in the global economy, either via supply chains or as exporters themselves. This could be an opportunity to increase support from local social partners to pursue initiatives to improve labour administration and inspection as a consequence of the promotion of the principles.
- Labour principles and companies. This could pick up the work requested by the ILO Governing Body MNE Subcommittee to explore ways by which the ILO could answer company enquires as to the meaning of labour standards. This work could build on the preparation of material outlined in point one and provide a more in-depth and living resource for Global Compact companies and the ILO and its constituents.
- The materials prepared could then form the basis of a more structured and consistent GC learning forum on the principles under the auspices of the ILO involving IOE and ITUC.
- In many countries, there are serious “rule of law” problems. That situation cannot be remedied or corrected by private action alone. Some of the principles are particularly difficult or even impossible to achieve without State action. Others, like freedom of association, in most countries can and should (and, in many cases, are) respected by companies even where the laws or enforcement are weak.

- Co-operation on the Global Compact is intended to be complementary to support for the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Both instruments are consistent with the Global Compact. Although not legally binding, the functioning and use of both instruments do not depend on their endorsement by individual firms.

Calendar

First meeting to be held in Geneva (Switzerland) during the International Labour Conference on Friday 30 May 2008 from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. (followed by a lunch), in Room III of the ILO Building.