

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**OPENING REMARKS AT THE UNITED NATIONS  
GLOBAL COMPACT LEADERS SUMMIT  
Geneva, 5 July 2007**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you to this United Nations Global Compact Leaders Summit.

Let me thank every one of you for attending. Many of you have travelled great distances to be here. With participants attending from over 90 countries, this Summit is a truly global event -- even by UN standards.

Your commitment to the Global Compact and the work of the United Nations is essential at a time when the objectives and priorities of the international community and the business world are more aligned than ever before.

We are here today as believers in the need for collective solution-finding. Shared goals, from market-building to environmental protection and social inclusion, have enabled us to build unprecedented partnerships among business, Governments, civil society, labour and the United Nations.

We are partners in the understanding that in our globalized world, many challenges are too interconnected and complex for any one sector to face alone.

And we are partners in striving to create a more effective, fair and representative framework that addresses the many wrongs and disruptions that afflict communities and markets around the planet.

The Global Compact is an outstanding example of our partnership. And this Summit is an important opportunity to take our partnership forward -- in learning as well as action. Over these two days, we must make an honest appraisal of what the Global Compact has achieved, renew our commitments, and chart a courageous course for the next three years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

That past seven years have been an eventful journey -- from the launch in July 2000, bringing together just 47 companies, to what is today the world's largest corporate citizenship initiative, counting 4,000 stakeholders in 116 countries.

In the beginning, some voiced scepticism about the UN working together with business. Today, I think we can say that the Global Compact has lived up to its promise -- bringing business together with other stakeholders, and infusing markets and economies with universal values.

Today, the Global Compact's participants are split almost evenly between developed and developing economies. Our local networks will soon span 80 countries. Participants have taken thousands of actions in support of the Global Compact's ten principles. We are seeing real impact in the areas of human rights, labour conditions, the environment, anti-corruption and partnerships for sustainable development.

During this Summit, we will hear from a range of global and local participants about how they are translating the aspirational principles of the Compact into concrete actions. We will witness new initiatives and ambitious projects being launched. We will learn about how the Compact is expanding into new spheres, including global financial markets and business education.

In sum, we will have a chance to assess the sea change that is taking place in the relationship between business and communities. Increasingly, as companies, you are embracing the Global Compact not because it makes for good public relations, or because you have paid a price for making mistakes. You are doing so because in our interdependent world, business leadership cannot be sustained without showing leadership on environmental, social and governance issues.

That interdependence brings with it a fundamental realization: That power cannot be separated from responsibility. That for business to enjoy sustained growth, we need to build trust and legitimacy. That for markets to expand in a sustainable way, we must provide those currently excluded with better and more opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

We are just beginning to act on this understanding. Certainly, we have made some progress in implementing the Global Compact's principles. But it is still uneven. We need to apply policies more deeply and specifically across the board.

Too often, in the areas that would benefit most from a robust global economy, business is still linked with serious dilemmas. Exploitative practices, corruption, income equality and other barriers discourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

And still we need to work much harder on the issue that I believe defines our collective future, more than another: climate change. Later today we will unveil a Business Leadership Platform on “Caring for Climate” -- a joint project with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Many of you have already made commitments to set targets for efficient energy use and reduce carbon emissions. It is my hope that “Caring for Climate” will set further examples. I ask you to use this platform to make the voice of reason heard by Governments, citizens and peers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the close of this Summit, we will issue the Geneva Declaration, so as to reaffirm our collective commitment, while providing a framework for future action. I hope you will share it with your peers and partners when you return home.

Our mission is a historic one. The challenge before us is clear: ensuring that companies apply the principles of the Compact within their own organizations, while enabling them to make common cause with other companies and other stakeholders is addressing global challenges and helping to meet the needs of the world’s people.

In this spirit, I call on business leaders assembled here to embrace the Compact as an organizing tool for your global operations. Ensure that your boards, subsidiaries and supply chain partners use the Compact as both a management guide and a moral compass.

In the same spirit, I call on leaders from trade unions and civil society to be critical but constructive partners. We need your knowledge and practical know-how.

I call on educators and teachers to bring the theory and practice of the Global Compact into schools and institutions of higher education, to inspire future leaders in our cause.

And I call on Governments to sustain their commitment, political, practical and financial, while nurturing the space required for voluntary initiatives to complement the role of Governments.

Finally, for my part, I pledge that the United Nations will extend its full support to all of you, so that we fulfil the Global Compact’s aspirations and vision. I wish you a most productive Summit.

Thank you very much.