Business for the Rule of Law
Project Overview

What is the rule of law?
The rule of law (ROL) is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.¹

Why is the rule of law important for business?
The ROL is essential for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Where the ROL is weak, it is harder for responsible business to function and to meet their corporate responsibilities and commitments to universal principles. Among other things, the ROL ensures legal systems foster economic investment by increasing the security of contracts, lowering levels of corruption, and allowing for timely, fair, transparent and predictable resolution of disputes. It is also concerned with legal identity and empowerment for individuals and organizations, enabling transition from the informal sector into the formal economy. Such individuals and organizations are at the base of many companies’ supply chains.

How can business get engaged in supporting the rule of law?
In September 2013, at an event hosted by LexisNexis and the Atlantic Council, the UN Secretary-General announced a new and exciting initiative – Business for the Rule of Law (B4ROL) – to engage the business community in efforts to support the rule of law. The Secretary-General has charged the United Nations Global Compact with leading the B4ROL initiative, which will serve as a complement to business respect for the UN Global Compact’s Ten Principles, and to inform the UN Global Compact’s narrative in business engagement in the Post 2015 Development Agenda (or Sustainable Development Goals).

The UN Global Compact is working closely with the Secretary General’s Rule of Law, which coordinates teams working on ROL across the entire UN System, and is guided by a multi-stakeholder Steering Group – co-chaired by Global Compact Board Members, Dr. Huguette Labelle and Prof. Pierre Sane.

The Steering Group will oversee the development of a framework on B4ROL (Framework) which aims to provide guidance and support dialogue on how businesses from around the world are able to take voluntary action to support the ROL in their operations and relationships, serving as a complement not substitute to government action. More than 70 examples of business action in support of the rule of law across sectors and countries have been collected reinforcing that many are already see the business case for such action. Such support can be through core business activities, strategic social investment and philanthropy, public policy engagement and advocacy, and/or partnerships and collective action.

As well as the development of the Framework, which will set out the business case, actions business can take and examples of actions that businesses have taken, B4ROL workstreams will also include:

- **Engagement** (including a global consultation process) with various societal actors at the global and local level – including States, business, academia, the legal profession, NGOs (e.g. business/industry associations, human rights organizations), intergovernmental organization and the UN system (Stakeholders); and

- Subject to the availability of resources, a Technology solution – as a dedicated gateway that is part of the UN Global Compact Business Partnership Hub – designed to build a community of interested Stakeholders to facilitate greater collaboration in support of the ROL.

The project is being managed within the UN Global Compact’s Governance and Social Sustainability Team. Efforts are underway to secure further funding and in-kind contributions to enable delivery on the Technology solution and other project milestones. Is it anticipated the global consultation process will take place throughout 2014/15 and the launch of the Framework will take place in June 2015.

To learn more about how businesses are actively supporting the rule of law or how to get involved please contact:

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