

## The UN Global Compact

The UN Global Compact is today, the largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative in the world. Launched in 2000, the Global Compact seeks to advance universal principles and core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption by channelling the efforts of business, UN agencies, labour, civil society and governments. More than 2,500 companies in over 90 countries participate in the Global Compact with over 50 local networks advancing the Global Compact's principles at the national and regional level.

Participating companies are required to develop an annual disclosure to their stakeholders on implementation actions within two years of joining the Global Compact initiative as evidence of their commitment to embrace and act upon its principles. The so-called 'Communication on Progress' is critical for transparency and public accountability, as investors, financial analysts, and money managers are increasingly demanding that companies disclose how they are turning their corporate responsibility commitments into policies and actions. In addition 'Communications on Progress' offer companies an opportunity to showcase actions and practices that can inspire others and constitutes an instrument in support of cross-pollination and learning opportunities.

Due to the nature of the Global Compact's complexities, organizations will encounter challenges as they embark upon their transformation, not least the complexities they face within their respective supply chains. Moreover, companies of all sizes will be required to collaborate with the public sector to maximize the benefits that could be obtained by being a signatory to the Global Compact.

As a local structure designed to support the implementation of the ten principles at regional level, the Regional Learning Forum (RLF) in South Africa, aims to offer a regional platform for actors engaged in corporate citizenship. The RLF assists to identify "business influencers" (e.g. the consulting industry, academic institutions, business schools and Human Resources) and supports their capacities to offer services to the private sector related to the core Global Compact principles.

Companies may well be interested to contact the RLF office in South Africa, which supports managers in Africa in their efforts to integrate the universal principles into their decision-making processes and core business operations.

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