



Children are everyone's business

Businesses asked to help protect and promote children's rights

NEW YORK, 24 June 2010 – At the opening of a major meeting of business leaders organized by the United Nations today, UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children called on the business community to work together to build universal principles that will place children's rights at the top of the global corporate responsibility agenda.

Campaigns to end child labour and other breaches of children's rights are nothing new, but to date there is no simple universal guidance that enables business to be confident their activities, including their social responsibility programmes, are a positive force for the youngest and most vulnerable global citizens.

The three organizations are asking business leaders to work with them to develop principles – to be known as the Children's Principles for Business – so that they can avoid the negative impacts that their activities may have on children, and contribute to a better future for everyone.

"Protecting children's rights is a global responsibility that requires global commitment from us all, in every sector," said Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director. "This new partnership will help to establish clear principles for businesses to participate in the global effort to help all children, and especially those most in need."

The Principles will be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which spells out the basic human rights of children everywhere: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

"Business has an enormous potential to impact children's lives," said Georg Kell, Executive Director of the UN Global Compact. "While much progress has been made in managing and mitigating impacts in areas such as child labour, workplace policies, childcare or responsible marketing, the Principles seek to address the broader responsibilities and commitments of business towards children as one of their constituencies."

Recognizing that to be effective, these principles must meet the needs of all stakeholders and that everyone has something to bring to the table, the three partners are appealing to business leaders from all sectors and geographic regions to participate in the consultation process and contribute their expertise to shaping the Children's Principles for Business.

"It is important that corporations step up and realise that they play a crucial role in children's lives," said Elisabeth Dahlin, Secretary-General of Save the Children Sweden. "The Children's principles for Business will raise the expectations of business behaviour towards children. Many companies can do more than they do today."

The Principles will serve as a unifying framework and as a reference point for business initiatives concerning children. They will help elaborate Principles 1 and 2 of the UN Global Compact, which ask business to respect and support human rights and not be complicit in human rights abuses. The Principles will seek to be relevant and useful to all businesses, whether or not they are Global Compact participants.

The multi-stakeholder consultation begins on 25 June 2010, and it is hoped that the Children's Principles for Business will be launched in 2011.

For further information and to get involved, businesses are asked to email Childrensprinciples@unglobalcompact.org

###

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work please visit: www.unicef.org

About Save the Children

Save the Children is the world's leading children's rights organisation, with 29 national Save the Children offices and operational programmes in over 120 countries. Our vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide. For more information about Save the Children please visit: www.savethechildren.net

About the UN Global Compact

Launched in 2000, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies around the world to align their strategies and operations with ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and to take action in support of broader UN goals. Through the development, implementation, and disclosure of responsible corporate policies and practices, business can help ensure that markets advance in ways that benefit economies and societies everywhere. The Global Compact is not a regulatory body, but a voluntary leadership platform for dialogue and learning. With more than 8,200 signatories in more than 135 countries, it is the world's largest corporate responsibility initiative. www.unglobalcompact.org

For further information, please contact:

Kate Donovan, UNICEF Media, New York, Tel: + 1 212 326 7452, kdonovan@unicef.org
Matthias Stausberg, UN Global Compact, New York, Tel: + 1 917 214-1337, stausberg@un.org
Titti Hildebrand, Save the Children, Stockholm, Mobile: + 46 701 91 57 28,
Titti.Hildebrand@rb.se