

Governments Urge Stronger Business Engagement on Sustainability and Development

(New York, 23 June 2010) – 125 ministers and other high-level Government officials attending a Ministerial Session in conjunction with the third UN Global Compact Leaders Summit today made a strong call for corporate responsibility.

High-level representatives of more than 40 Governments issued a Ministerial Statement recognizing the crucial role of Governments in promoting corporate responsibility and engaging the private sector in achieving the Millennium Development Goals - eight global objectives, ranging from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.

The Government representatives encouraged the private sector to contribute to sustainability and development through market based approaches that further economic, social and environmental progress.

Governments can support this by creating an enabling environment, highlighting best practice, raising awareness, providing technical assistance and supporting development of tools and capacity.

Partnerships and multi-stakeholder initiatives are important

The Government representatives committed to partnering with business and cooperating with multi-stakeholder initiatives to achieve development, promote innovation, enable business environment and advance scalable solutions in ways that have the potential to go beyond what each stakeholder could deliver on their own.

Session participants also acknowledged voluntary initiatives, such as the Global Compact, as powerful complements to regulation, while recognizing that voluntary initiatives can never be a substitute for effective regulation.

“The Ministerial Statement will break new ground,” said Arun Maira, Member of the Planning Commission of India. “Based on the experience made and lessons learned, the Statement spells out how best Governments can advance the role of business in support of sustainable development. The Statement gives full recognition to the critical role the private sector has in shaping the future.”

“It is crucial that governments take action in this field, and I hope that this Statement will inspire Governments all over the world,” said Mr. Brian Mikkelsen, Minister for Economic and Business Affairs of Denmark, one of the lead initiators of the Statement. “Denmark is actively supporting the UN Global Compact and the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investments - because they're globally recognized and allow companies and investors to work with corporate responsibility in a business driven way”

At the Ministerial Session, a background report was launched on the role of Governments in promoting corporate responsibility and private engagement in development. In this report Botswana, China, Denmark, Germany and Mexico are mentioned as innovative examples of public policy for corporate responsibility.

The study was prepared by the UN Global Compact in collaboration with the Bertelsmann Foundation.

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