

SDG AMBITION

SCALING
BUSINESS
IMPACT FOR
THE DECADE
OF ACTION



United Nations
Global Compact

In partnership with

accenture





Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

“What we need is not an incremental approach, but a transformational approach.

And we need businesses to unite behind the science by taking rapid and ambitious action across their operations and value chains.”

António Guterres
Secretary-General
of the United Nations

“The global business community is not moving at the speed or scale needed to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals will not become a reality without greater ambition as well as deeper integration across the organization.

We hope that SDG Ambition will create an unstoppable global movement to bring us closer to the world we want.”

Lise Kingo
Executive Director & CEO
UN Global Compact



Photo: UN Global Compact

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Companies are invited to join the UN Global Compact and partners to kickstart the Decade of Action to 2030 by joining SDG Ambition.

Together, companies will raise their level of ambition to meet the needs of society and planet by fully integrating sustainability into their company, informed and inspired by the SDGs.

LEARN MORE AT:
unglobalcompact.org/SDGambition

KICKSTARTING A DECADE OF ACTION

The need for increased business ambition is clear.

As the heart of the 2030 Agenda, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs or Global Goals) reflect a bold vision for humanity. But when world leaders convened in September 2019 at the United Nations to review progress toward the 17 SDGs, the stocktaking moment conveyed a clear message: the world is not making progress at nearly the pace and scale needed to meet our collective goals. At the same time, results from two new studies — the UN Global Compact Progress Report 2019 and the UN Global Compact-Accenture Strategy CEO Study 2019 — show that business needs to be doing much more if we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

While there have been bright spots of progress in a number of areas, advancement towards the SDGs has been slow or even reversed. Climate change, poverty, loss of biodiversity, and widening social inequalities continue to present major existential threats to our future. The challenge posed to the global community: how can we grow with equity, while protecting our planet? The good news is that it is still possible to shift the world onto a 1.5°C trajectory, reduce global inequalities, and achieve the SDGs by 2030. However, this will require bold leadership to transform business models and economies so the SDGs are achieved, leaving no one behind.

Only by establishing a “new normal” for the global business community will we start experiencing actual tipping points.

This is our starting line as we launch into the year 2020, the beginning of the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs.

Against this backdrop, the UN Global Compact is launching a new global impact initiative — **SDG AMBITION** — to challenge and support companies in being more strategic, and transformational in how they run their businesses to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. Through SDG Ambition, we will challenge companies to set bolder goals aligned with their purpose, governance, and strategy — and address barriers to speed and scale — with enterprise-wide integration that hardwires the SDGs into business management, business processes, and information technology landscapes. We will also support companies collaborate better with their partners to spread change in their broader ecosystems. By raising ambition, deepening integration, and embracing new technologies we believe business can become a leading actor in achieving the SDGs.



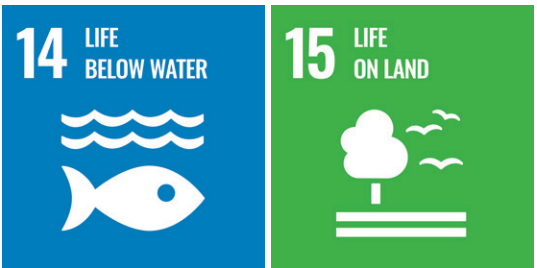
700
million people in
extreme poverty

202
more years
to close the
economic gender
gap at the current
pace



70
million children,
women, and men
forcibly displaced

On track for
3.5°C
temperature
rises this century
per current
commitments



8
million metric
tons of plastics
enter our oceans
every year

Loss of humid
tropical primary
forests up by
44%
compared to
2002-2013
baseline

SDG 1 - World Bank (2018), Poverty and Shared Prosperity – 2015 Forecasts.
SDG 5 - WEF (2018), The Global Gender Gap Report 2018.
SDG 11 - UNHCR (2019), Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2018.

SDG 13 - UNEP (2019), Emissions Gap Report 2019.
SDG 14 - Science (2015), Plastic Waste Inputs From Land Into The Ocean.
SDG 15 - NYDF (2019), Protecting and Restoring Forests – 5 Year Assessment Report.

Photo: iStock



EVOLVING BUSINESS SUCCESS CRITERIA

The exponential forces of ecological, social and technological conditions are fundamentally changing the way businesses operate and succeed

Widening inequalities, for example, are destabilizing communities and markets in which companies operate, and 88% of CEOs see a need for economic systems to refocus on equitable growth. Climate and environmental degradation are also turning into real operational challenges, from changing harvest periods to disrupting plant operations to affecting supply and demand. CEOs now rank environmental degradation as the second most important issue to their competitive strategies.

A broader set of stakeholders – from investors to customers and employees – are further challenging companies to respond to changing societal values, concerns about climate change and finite natural resources, and economic and political instability. More than three-quarters (76%) of CEOs believe sustainability and trust will be critical to competitiveness in their industry in the next five years.

As a result, business success criteria and economic models are shifting. Successful businesses will be those that meet the needs of as many people as possible, utilize as few resources as possible, and engage in meaningful dialogue with their stakeholders. This is a positive call to redefine growth and work in new ways that improve our lives and our world.

New success criteria for the future will support a broader set of business objectives, including:

DEVELOP SOLUTIONS TO THE WORLD'S GREATEST CHALLENGES

Multinational companies have the mindset and resources to tackle the world's most pressing problems at the center of innovation and business development.

REDEFINE CORPORATE SUCCESS BASED ON PURPOSE AND WITH A BROADER VIEW OF STAKEHOLDERS

Expectations are shifting for companies to go beyond long-established standards for financial performance to include metrics for impact, resiliency, and a greater sense of shared responsibility for humanity's future.

TRANSFORM TO A MORE HUMAN-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

Transformation will mean organizational change and upskilling at all levels to unleash creativity, agility, and problem solving to deliver responsive solutions with increased speed.

The SDGs provide a unique framework – with a built-in level of ambition – for all stakeholders and companies to align their organizations with environmental and social factors that will be important for measuring success, such as good health or reduced waste. Aligning ambition with the SDGs offers the opportunity to imagine new ways to create and celebrate value, such as through innovating new solutions, using fewer inputs, or reducing reliance on scarce resources.



A Principle-based Approach to the SDGs

Key to achieving the SDGs is behaving and operating in a principled manner. Building a resilient and sustainable business in an age of exponential change requires alignment with the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact. Derived from UN Declarations and Conventions, these universal principles represent the fundamental values that business should embed in their daily strategies and operations. Without these foundational elements anchoring our approach to the SDGs, we risk undermining progress and putting people at risk.



HUMAN RIGHTS



LABOUR



ENVIRONMENT



ANTI-CORRUPTION



THE UN GLOBAL COMPACT SDG IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK



SDG IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

With the launch of the SDG Ambition platform, the UN Global Compact is proud to share its new SDG Implementation Framework, which aims to guide companies to deepen integration of the SDGs and Ten Principles into business strategy, operations, and stakeholder engagement.

The Framework builds on research and engagement with companies pioneering action on sustainability, combining the key recommendations from the Board Programme, the SDG Compass, the Blueprint for Business Leadership on the SDGs, the Practical Guide on SDG Reporting, and other global resources.

THE FRAMEWORK IS ORGANIZED IN THREE PRIMARY AREAS:

Anchoring Ambition in Strategy and Governance

Sets the business foundation for raising ambition by grounding corporate Purpose, Governance, and Strategy & Goals in business objectives aligned to the SDGs and the Ten Principles.

Deepening Integration Across Operations

Integrating these strategic elements into operations across Products & Services, People Management and Corporate Finance to drive business transformation.

Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement

Working to amplify efforts and scale solutions via Reporting & Corporate Communications, Sales & Marketing and Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement.

The elements across the Framework are highly interdependent and provide a roadmap to a strategic and integrated approach to the SDGs.

First and foremost, to seriously attempt to address the SDGs, companies must Anchor Ambition in Strategy & Governance — redefining the Purpose, Governance, and Strategy & Goals of the business towards a bold mission driven by purpose, ensuring key decisions about the future direction of the company are made to scale impact for the SDGs. Once companies have set the foundation at the strategic level, ensuring the necessary business transformation requires Deepening Integration Across Operations, and implementation of sustainable business processes within Products & Services, People Management and Corporate Finance. Finally, as companies embark on integrating ambition, they can at the same time authentically increase focus on the third pillar — Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement — to amplify efforts and scale solutions via Reporting & Corporate Communications, Sales & Marketing and Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement.

In this section, we will explore these three areas and their sub-elements and provide guidance on how companies can take bold action on the SDGs through implementing SDG Ambition in their companies and across their business stakeholder ecosystems.



ANCHORING AMBITION IN STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

Raising corporate ambition requires pivoting the organization through core business transformation. Companies can start by redefining corporate Purpose to align with bold impact on the SDGs, which should be built into Governance to ensure full responsibility for the transformation agenda via new Corporate Strategies & Goals that are anchored in a balanced scorecard. It is critical that organizations start by integrating ambition into the strategic transformation of the business, or we risk efforts will be marginal in progressing the SDGs.

PURPOSE

A first step is aligning or reorienting the fundamental objectives and focus of the business with the SDGs. With a growing imperative to look beyond near-term financial outcomes, leading companies are refreshing their mission statements and core values, drawing inspiration from the SDGs and Ten Principles to reorient their purpose towards the creation of a more sustainable and equitable future.

Alignment of purpose with the SDGs will depend on each individual company's core assets and growth trajectory, but should also stem from an authentic intent and passion within the company's culture. Organizations can focus their unique strengths and business imperatives to stake out a leadership position in tackling global challenges through transformative solutions that benefit society at a more ambitious scale. For example, an automotive company might strive to "transition the world to sustainable or emission-free mobility" whereas an agricultural producer may aim to "build a food system where everyone has access to nutritious food". Such missions support core business strategies and establish priorities for the organization that unlock employee motivation and creativity. Business in turn is positively contributing to society and directly advancing SDGs, from reducing emissions to addressing hunger, improving health and enabling more livable cities.

GOVERNANCE

Establishing corporate governance that promotes the corporate purpose and its contribution to the SDGs is essential. The Board of Directors, tasked with key decisions such as endorsing strategic priorities and goals, selection and compensation of executives, and building purpose-driven culture, remains the primary group for directing corporate governance. As such, leading this transformation to a more sustainable and inclusive business model should be a regular agenda item for the Board and inform its decision points.

Overseeing the integration of sustainability considerations and aligning with the SDGs are not distinct, but an integral part of existing Board responsibilities and committees. Specific mechanisms such as recruiting and incentivizing future-orientated, diverse leadership can further ensure the prioritization and adoption of corporate ambitions related to the SDGs. Companies should proactively embed sustainability into their oversight and internal control responsibilities. This can facilitate a strong values-based and top-down governance approach on complex challenges, such as pay equality, across multinational operations. Successful transformation of their companies to a more sustainable direction with necessitate Boards having the right mix of competencies as well as diversity of gender, race, experience, and points of view.

CORPORATE STRATEGY & GOALS

Embedding purpose into strategy begins with reshaping the company's competitive positioning, business model, and product offerings to the market in ways that create entirely new forms of business value. Identifying and prioritizing specific actions and goals to drive these new business objectives that advance the SDGs will require impact assessment and prioritization across the value chain and broader ecosystem. For example, an apparel company may prioritize gender equality in the supply chain, whereas a financial institution may direct capital to opportunities in clean energy.

To ensure meaningful and measurable contribution, it is critical to set ambitious and bold targets well above a business-as-usual scenario. Forefront companies are setting absolute benchmarks, such as a 1.5°C science-based target, shifting to 100% renewable power or implementing equal pay and access to healthcare for all employees across their global operations. Establishing KPIs and tracking data on progress as part of a balanced scorecard will help ensure business decisions and resources align with outcomes for the SDGs.

Key Success Factors

When aligning corporate purpose and strategies to the SDGs, it is important to consider both (1) where a business can have the greatest contribution (directly through operations or products or indirectly, such as through helping consumers make more sustainable choices) and (2) how those actions will help drive traditional business objectives and create new forms of customer value (see Business Success Criteria, p. 6).

Business objectives aligned with the SDGs should be mutually beneficial to society and the company. For example, shifting to a purpose-driven portfolio can grow market share and customer loyalty, whereas providing training and apprenticeship programs can help build a qualified workforce. A strong case for change will help gain leadership buy-in at the C-Suite and Board level, which is critical to ensure SDG ambition is prioritized across the company's purpose, governance and strategy.

Finally, it is important that trade-offs and unintended consequences are considered across actions. The Global Goals are purposely interconnected and progress on one Goal may advance or impede progress on another. Proactively managing these connection points aids in building holistic platforms and solutions that accelerate progress while reducing negative impacts.

DEEPENING INTEGRATION ACROSS OPERATIONS

Once companies have set the foundation and built SDG Ambition into corporate Purpose, Governance, and Strategy and Goals, they can shift to implementation across core business operations and processes. This involves integration into Products and Services, adoption of related behaviors through People Management, and Finance and planning that enables investment in these transformations across the business.

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

A key lever for business contribution to the SDGs is through innovating core products and services that meet changing consumer desires (such as for more sustainable materials) and help futureproof the business (such as by reducing reliance on scarce resources), while contributing to positive societal and environmental outcomes. While increasingly critical for competitiveness, integrating SDG-linked objectives into portfolio strategy and offerings requires changes to upfront processes for research and product development, such as implementing new design criteria that prioritize sustainability and lifecycle assessment alongside typical criteria such as cost and performance.

Product changes also require broader operational integration, from sourcing and procurement of raw materials to establishing more sustainable supply chains to ensuring manufacturing and support services are aligned to support SDG-related goals. Overall continuous performance improvement and total quality management play a key role to ensure integration at all levels of the organization, within all areas of responsibility, and across financial and sustainability goals. As new offerings go to market, mechanisms should also be in place to manage product impact while in use and at end of life.

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Embedding the SDGs into the core of what the business does, will rely on shifts in corporate culture and people management practices, from building SDG-aligned objectives into role descriptions and performance management to creating leadership structures and incentivization policies (e.g. assigning leads across functions that are accountable for delivering on their respective goals). Implementing new processes and training to equip employees with new ways of thinking and working — such as criteria to select a more responsible vendor or guidelines to reduce their own travel — will also be critical for engagement and scale.

Additionally, human resources will play an important and direct role in raising ambition on certain SDGs, by integrating targets for equal representation across the workforce and through recruitment and retention efforts that highlight a company's commitment to the SDGs and Ten Principles. Around the world, sustainability is proving to be a key factor in attracting and retaining top talent. As ambition expands beyond a company's own employees, integration may extend to other functions, such as contractor management.

CORPORATE FINANCE

To direct financial resource toward product and organizational transformation, it is important to integrate SDG-related business priorities into the flow of capital and budget within an organization. From investments toward research and development to capital allocations for new facilities and equipment, these decisions are a critical factor for progress on any strategic initiative. Financial tracking should capture data on contribution to the SDGs to factor into ongoing investment and capital decisions.

Further integrating the SDGs into financial management processes, such as by updating risk and revenue expectations via modified hurdle rates, can enable investment in transformative SDG initiatives and encourage the right behaviors and decisions. For example, changing accounting processes for assigning value to returned inventory can be a key enabler of circular business models for product resale and reuse.

Key Success Factors

Building the right capability and platform infrastructure is both a key challenge and enabler for integrating business-driven sustainability solutions and SDG Ambition. For example, the ability to monitor and track resources — through better data, systems and automation — is critical to a company's ability to enable reverse flow of goods and new business models.

Integration also requires interaction across functions to establish common workflows and make SDG information management and tools accessible by everyone. Therefore, investing in data architecture technology to embed and optimize SDG Ambition across functions and processes is key to build capability, accelerate and scale.



ENHANCING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As companies make progress integrating SDG Ambition into core Products and Services, People Management, and Finance, they can amplify their efforts via external stakeholder and ecosystem engagement. Embedding ambition into Reporting and Corporate Communications can enable performance recognition, accountability and authenticity through independent feedback loops, while Sales and Marketing promotes market uptake and awareness, and expanding Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement can help accelerate scale through wider collaboration.

REPORTING & CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Embedding ambition into quarterly and annual investor relations is important to ensure transparency and accountability, and SDG alignment can inform more consistent ESG information and standards. These messages and data points enable the communication of long-term value generation and recruitment of investors with a greater focus on longer term returns.

Authentic external engagement and reporting of SDG progress requires defining goals and metrics that can be embedded throughout the business and drive ongoing management across the organization (versus aligning to the SDGs 'after-the-fact' for reporting purposes). This can be supported by key internal stakeholders — the Board, executives, business lines, and employees — working in tandem via internal feedback loops and streamlined communications channels to drive forward sustainability ambition.

SALES & MARKETING

Orienting marketing messaging to articulate the holistic value of a company's strategy, products and services, and operations — including contribution to SDGs — will build broader awareness with external stakeholders, customers, and peers. In a win-win, this propels markets for your sustainable products and services and at the same time compels industry competitors to react to a raised bar, driving a 'race to the top'.

Sales teams play a critical role in promoting and communicating the value proposition across the product lifecycle, alongside conventional value drivers such as performance or costs. Ideally, these will go hand-in-hand — for instance, a lower impact, more sustainably produced protein may also come with superior nutritional benefits, or a new as-a-service circular business model may improve the economics for the customer. Integrating messaging and incentives into product and brand marketing and sales teams will be key to scale.

PARTNERSHIPS & STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

Companies can accelerate broader market transformation and adoption of solutions that advance the SDGs by leading, championing, and developing industry-wide partnerships. Ecosystem collaboration across industries and with government regulators, NGOs, startups, academia, and communities can help develop critical infrastructure — from collection and recycling to electrification networks — or accelerate innovation of breakthrough technologies for advancing the SDGs. These external relationships not only help grow the core business but extend companies' social licenses to operate.

When companies come together with industry peers or partners along the value chain, it further raises the playing field for all, and paves the way to engage with governments and policymakers to drive action.

Key Success Factors

'What gets measured, gets managed' and financial metrics dominate performance management of most companies. And today company sustainability reporting activities, such as the UN Global Compact Communication on Progress, annual sustainability reports, and responses to third party requests tend to rely on manual collection and aggregation of disparate information across functions.

Truly integrating SDG Ambition will require much more robust processes and systems for measuring and tracking KPIs that will both drive internal management and support external reporting. Therefore, it is fundamental to hardwire SDG-related business goals and outcomes into core processes and information flows within the organization and the core management of business, to materially accelerate progress toward the SDGs.



Photo: iStock

SDG AMBITION

A New UN Global Compact Initiative

SDG Ambition will encourage companies around the world to raise their level of ambition to meet the needs of society and planet by fully integrating sustainability into their company, informed and inspired by the SDGs. The initiative will challenge and support companies to:

Develop SDG Competencies



SDG AMBITION COMPONENTS

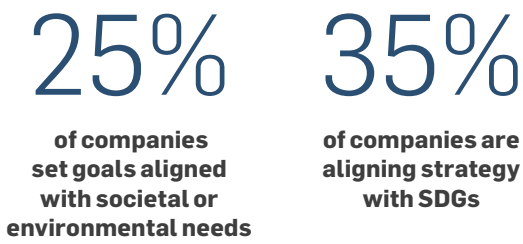
While at first these components may appear to be approached sequentially, they instead need to lock together and strengthen each other through information flows across business systems and processes. For example, without sufficiently ambitious goals and targets, organizations will be challenged to integrate fully across the core of their business. In turn, that complete integration will be difficult without the vision driven by those goals. Neither greater ambition nor enhanced integration would be possible without new technical capabilities to scale and generate the change required.



Expected Outcomes

SETTING AMBITIOUS GOALS AND TARGETS

The platform will enable businesses to increase their contributions to the SDGs by providing guidance on raising their ambition — meaningfully above business-as-usual — and establishing absolute targets. This will include development of tools and guidance for integrating the SDGs into the core purpose of the business and strategy; benchmarks and KPIs for concrete, measurable goal-setting; and establishing governance and accountabilities.



EXPANDING INTEGRATION APPROACHES

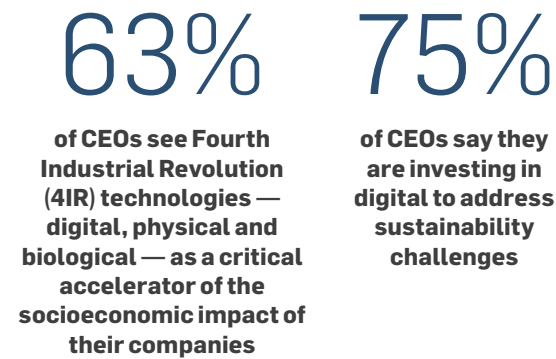
The second, interconnected component of the platform will support companies in integrating the SDGs enterprise-wide into business processes, as well as core information flows for how they measure, manage, and report across the business. This will include applying the SDG Implementation Framework to core business processes, data and platforms; practical tool development; and industry-specific application based on high impact areas across the SDGs and the Ten Principles.

TOP 3 BARRIERS TO INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY



EMBRACING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Lastly, technology will be a key enabler of SDG Ambition to deliver on these outcomes. Transparent, open platforms will provide the technical capacity to smooth the business integration of the SDGs and the Ten Principles into routine management processes and reporting tools.



OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS,

SDG Ambition will mobilize companies globally to raise their ambition and integrate the SDGs into core business, kickstarting The Decade of Action to 2030.

ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES:

UN Global Compact Local Networks, located in more than 60 countries worldwide, will lead program implementation, training, and company engagement at the country level. Using the SDG Implementation Framework as an anchor point, the platform will engage companies across industries to focus their SDG Ambition journeys on high-impact strategies and practical implementation.

Ensuring the initiative is outcome-oriented, practically aligned to the realities and needs of business, and globally relevant will be critical to the success of the initiative. To achieve this, we have partnered with SAP and Accenture, given their strength in helping deliver transformative change and their depth of both strategic and technical understanding of organizational and systems integration.

Together we can meet the challenge laid out in 2015 by our global community and deliver a more sustainable, just, and prosperous world for future generations. We encourage you to join us on the journey to achieve the world's 2030 sustainability agenda and be a part of SDG Ambition.





SDG AMBITION

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ABOUT ACCENTURE

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions — underpinned by the world’s largest delivery network — Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With 505,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com.

ABOUT SAP

SAP is the market leader in enterprise application software, helping businesses of all sizes and in all industries to operate profitably, adapt continuously, and achieve their purpose. Our vision is to help the world run better and improve people’s lives. As a global leader and a participant in the UN Global Compact, we stand for this higher purpose beyond economic success. Our pledge is to use our extensive resources to make a positive global impact. Learn more at sap.com/corporate/en/company.html

DISCLAIMER

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THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT



HUMAN RIGHTS

- 1 Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
- 2 make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.



LABOUR

- 3 Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- 4 the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour
- 5 the effective abolition of child labour; and
- 6 the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.



ENVIRONMENT

- 7 Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
- 8 undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and
- 9 encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.



ANTI-CORRUPTION

- 10 Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Launched in 2000, the mandate of the UN Global Compact is to guide and support the global business community in advancing UN goals and values through responsible corporate practices. With more than 9,500 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries, and more than 60 Local Networks, it is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world.

For more information, follow [@globalcompact](https://twitter.com/globalcompact) on social media and visit our website at unglobalcompact.org.



United Nations
Global Compact

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The Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact are derived from: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.