A Shared Vision: Respecting Human Rights

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) Local Networks (GCLNs) both have important roles to play in strengthening business respect for and support of human rights. NHRIs and Local Networks share an aim: helping business understand and give effect to their human rights responsibilities and commitments. This common goal provides a strong foundation for NHRIs and Local Networks to explore opportunities for collaboration and mutual support.

UN Global Compact Human Rights Working Group

In 2006, the UN Global Compact Office established a Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) to help advance the business and human rights agenda within the framework of the Global Compact. The HRWG is multi-stakeholder in composition, comprised of UNGC companies, GCLN representatives with particular interest in business and human rights, individuals from international organisations, civil society organisations active in business and human rights, academia, and business networks.

The HRWG provides strategic direction for the UNGC’s human rights work. This includes helping to highlight emerging human rights issues as well as identifying and promoting useful human rights tools, resources, and good practices for business.

The HRWG is particularly focused on the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights. For more information please see:

http://www.businesshumanrights.org/SpecialRepPortal/Home

Another key objective of the HRWG is to support Local Networks and their efforts to promote respect and support of human rights in the business context.

The first two principles of the UN Global Compact, which are derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are:

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

All ten Principles of the UN Global Compact can be seen online: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html.
Introducing UNGC Local Networks

› UNGC and Human Rights

The Global Compact takes a two pronged practical approach to business and human rights awareness raising, focusing on:
1) What human rights are and how they are relevant for business; and
2) What business can do within their own operations and more broadly in their areas of influence to respect and support human rights.

› What are Local Networks?

GCLNs are organised by UNGC participants and stakeholders in a given country, who come together voluntarily to advance the UNGC and its Ten Principles. GCLNs serve an essential role in anchoring and advancing the UNGC within various national contexts, taking into account their distinct national economic, social, development and cultural profiles.

› What do GCLNs do?

Though very diverse in their activities, all GCLNs share the same mission: to advance the ten UNGC Principles within participating businesses in their strategy, operations and spheres of influence.

› Why should companies get involved in a GCLNs?

Joining Local Networks gives companies the opportunity to engage a wide variety of stakeholders including businesses as well as representatives from civil society, government, academia, and professional associations to exchange ideas and share experiences towards implementing the Principles of the UNGC.

All UNGC participating companies are encouraged to get involved in their Local Networks. Additionally, when relevant, parent companies can facilitate engagement by subsidiaries.

As described in the Case Studies section of this Fact Sheet, GCLNs can become key players in increasing awareness and mobilising business activities on sustainability and human rights in their national context. Local Networks are a good conduit to help UNGC participants think globally and act locally.

By the end of 2011, there were more than 110 GCLNs and 126 NHRIs. Many already have capacity in business and human rights.

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Human rights remain one of the most challenging areas of corporate citizenship. In part, because human rights were traditionally the concern of states.

Increasingly, however, more companies have come to realise the need to address human rights issues within their own operations and activities, for legal, moral, and/or commercial reasons.

“There have never been more Local Networks. And even more gratifying, there have never been more established Local Networks with a wider range of stakeholders firmly rooted in their communities and committed to stay the course. There has also never been a larger pool of experiences readily available for Local Network participants, who cut across all stakeholder groups – large companies, small businesses, universities, labour unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).”

For more information on GCLNs, please see: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/NetworksAroundTheWorld/
Introducing National Human Rights Institutions

› What are NHRIs?

NHRIs are independent, expert bodies on human rights established through national laws or constitutions. NHRIs have a legal mandate to engage in activities to promote and protect human rights. These activities can include outreach and human rights education. NHRIs are not NGOs (nongovernment organisations).

They are public bodies, part of the state but independent of the national government. Their roles are distinct yet complementary to those of NGOs and governments. To guarantee their independence, pluralism, and effectiveness, NHRIs are subject to periodic peer review and accreditation.

› NHRIs and the United Nations

The UN strongly supports NHRIs. The UN General Assembly’s 1993 Principles Relating to the Status and Functioning of National Institutions (Paris Principles) set minimum international standards on independence and core functions of NHRIs. The UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) provides institutional support for NHRIs. OHCHR helps to establish and/or strengthen NHRIs, and to build their capacity to work effectively and independently in compliance with the Paris Principles. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) also works closely with individual NHRIs across the globe.

› NHRIs: Building corporate respect for human rights

In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council welcomed the NHRIs’ roles in relation to human rights and business, and encouraged them to build their capacity on business and human rights. The 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights also highlight NHRIs’ role across the UN “Protect, Respect, Remedy” framework on business and human rights:

• Pillar 1: NHRIs can help to align national law and regulations on business with human rights;
• Pillar 2: NHRIs can provide expert, independent advice to business on human rights issues; and
• Pillar 3: NHRIs can facilitate mediation or conciliation of complaints about human rights and business issues.

For more information on NHRIs, please see the ICC website http://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/default.aspx
GCLNs

- Legislative frameworks
  GCLNs and NHRI s can promote more effective implementation of governments' human rights obligations at the national level, e.g. through information exchange and awareness raising on relevant legislation and policy measures.

- Direct engagement with business
  GCLNs can work with NHRI s to coordinate outreach to national businesses and business associations to promote engagement on human rights issues, e.g. through multi-stakeholder platforms. Dialogue events also can help identify business related human rights impacts and opportunities, and clarify human rights standards that business is expected to uphold.

- Convening national dialogues
  NHRI s and GCLNs can act as conveners for discussions among business, government bodies, and other stakeholders on important human rights and business issues at the national level, building understanding and identifying common challenges and solutions.

- Information, education, and awareness raising
  NHRI s and GCLNs can collaborate to develop platforms to provide information, education, research and public awareness on business and human rights issues for companies and other stakeholders. They can also co-host public events to stimulate awareness and engagement by business and communities on sustainability issues.

NHRIs

- Human rights due diligence tools
  GCLNs and NHRI s can promote learning at the national level among businesses and other key stakeholders regarding tools and methods that businesses can use to implement their responsibility to respect and commitment to support human rights and to undertake human rights due diligence.

- Partnering with international organisations
  NHRI s and GCLNs can jointly facilitate stronger dialogue on human rights and business with United Nations agencies at the national level (e.g. OHCHR, ILO, UNEP, UNDP and UNIDO) as well as with relevant regional institutions, leading to identification of partnering project opportunities.

- Cooperating with civil society
  GCLNs' engagement with NHRI s may help liaising with civil society organisations, especially those working in the fields of corporate responsibility, human rights, and development, to build a better environment for business respect and support for human rights.
Dave Kornblith

Global Compact Self Assessment Tool:
http://www.globalcompactselfassessment.org/

Supporting national dialogue on food security
South Africa

In February 2009, the South African GCLN, the National Business Initiative, and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) worked together to organise a multi-stakeholder seminar to identify scope for coordinated food security interventions by business, government, and civil society.

The seminar considered innovative approaches to better safeguard South Africa’s food security situation. Participants included the Food Security Directorate of the National Department of Agriculture, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, Action Aid and Reos Partners. For more information on SAHRC, please see http://www.sahrc.org.za/home/, and the National Business Initiative: http://www.nbi.org.za/
Building Awareness and Identifying Common Challenges

South Korea

South Korea’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRCK) and the Global Compact Korea Network (GCKN) are collaborating to promote awareness of business and human rights issues:

2008

Launching the collaboration
NHRCK and GCKN co-hosted an international conference on human rights and socially responsible investment.

2009

Discussing the issues

2011

Identifying the challenges
During the Roundtable, NHRCK and GCKN identified challenges for the future development of human rights and business initiatives in South Korea. These included the need to increase understanding of human rights issues within the business sector, how to improve senior leadership engagement; promoting dialogue on human rights across industry sectors; and the need to find ways to bridge gaps between stakeholders’ diverse perspectives and expectations (e.g. between corporate managers and public policy actors).

Find your National Human Rights Institution and UNGC Local Network

National human rights institutions:
http://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/Contact/NHRIs/Pages/default.aspx

UNGC Local Networks:
http://www.unglobalcompact.org/NetworksAroundTheWorld/index.html

“...business potential to advance human rights takes place on the ground. And that’s where both UN Global Compact Local Networks and NHRIs operate - making it so important that they work together.”

John Ruggie
former UN Special Rapporteur on Business and Human Rights

“The Global Compact Korea Network in cooperation with the NHRIs is continuously endeavoring to promote the business management integrated with human rights. Through extensive collaboration with the NHRIs, the GCKN has been able to promote a business culture in Korea that respects and values human rights.”

Chulki Ju
Secretary General and Vice President of the Global Compact Korea Network

“I sincerely hope to see the active implementation of cooperation between the NHRIs and the GCLN in order to foster business respect for human rights.”

Byungchul Hyun
President of National Human Rights Commission of Korea