

**Statement of Georg Kell, Executive Director, UN Global Compact Office
Launch of the Women's Empowerment Principles – Equality Means
Business**

8 March 2010

There is much that business is doing and more that business can do to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. The Women's Empowerment Principles make concrete suggestions across all these areas.

The Principles are informed by actual business policies and practices gathered from companies across different sectors around the world. The actions that can be taken are thus proven, practical and within reach. They range from policies and practices to promote equal opportunity and safety in the workplace to supporting women's entrepreneurship through the supply chain; from ensuring marketing campaigns are respectful of women to supporting advocacy campaigns to end violence against women and participating in community initiatives on girls' education.

As the information accompanying the Principles demonstrates, the business case and the development arguments for action to empower women are robust. As such, the Principles point the way to a future that is both more prosperous and fair for everyone.

Rather than being prescriptive or just another initiative to which business is asked to subscribe, the Women's Empowerment Principles suggest best practice by elaborating the gender dimension of good corporate citizenship, the UN Global Compact, and business' role in sustainable development. Many businesses already have policies, practices and programmes to empower women, but they are not necessarily seen as strategic to the business or as a key element of a company's corporate responsibility efforts. Through the Principles and the gender lens that they promote, we seek to build support for a broader concept of corporate sustainability that more explicitly embraces women's empowerment as a key goal that will help foster sustainable development and benefit women and men.

The Women's Empowerment Principles, which were adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles, are the result of a partnership between UNIFEM and the UN Global Compact and a year-long international multi-stakeholder consultation. The Principles help to demonstrate the strategic advantages for exploring the linkage between the corporate responsibility agenda and the advancement of women and development. Just as the UN Global Compact and UNIFEM have joined forces on the Principles, we hope that business will leverage the connections

between their own corporate responsibility efforts and their actions to empower women.

There are seven Principles. I want to mention two in particular to illustrate how these related agendas are mutually reinforcing: Principle 1 and Principle 7, addressing Leadership and Transparency and Reporting respectively. Both are critical for making progress on corporate responsibility and gender equality. Both are emphasized by the UN Global Compact as essential for effective and lasting organizational change. Securing buy in from the leadership of an organization will help to accelerate and ease cultural change. And being more transparent on the policies and practices that the company has in place to manage risk and take advantage of opportunities to advance corporate responsibility and its business, as well as on the results of such efforts, help to drive further performance. This has been the experience of the UN Global Compact's own annual disclosure requirement - the Communication on Progress.

As well as being a useful guide for business, it is hoped that the Principles will help inform other stakeholders, including governments, in their engagement with business.