## Post-2015 Agenda and Related Sustainable Development Goals
Issue Focus: Peace, Stability and the Role of Business

Overview

As governments and policymakers work to develop the Post-2015 agenda, the international community is actively discussing the possible scope of potential sustainable development goals (SDGs). Businesses participating in dedicated consultations considered peace and security to be crucial to sustainable development, and an area where their own interests give them reason to complement the responsibility of public institutions to build and maintain peaceful situations.

The United Nations Global Compact has been asked to bring private sector perspectives and action to the Post-2015 global development agenda, creating an historic opportunity to scale up and align business efforts in order to effectively contribute to United Nations priorities. The overlap between public and private interest in sustainable development is becoming increasingly clear, and the development of the Post-2015 agenda will require an unprecedented level of interplay between business, governments, civil societies and other key stakeholders. This public-private convergence and opportunity space is reflected in the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture, released at the UN Global Compact Leaders Summit in September 2013. The Architecture provides a resource and roadmap for how to work with the private sector in the new era.

Related to the Architecture, consultations conducted by the UN Global Compact with thousands of companies and stakeholders revealed that businesses committed to sustainability and ethics are energized by the prospect of a newly articulated set of world priorities—including clear goals and targets. From the input received, the UN Global Compact's LEAD companies developed a series of recommended goals and priority areas (shown below) that they believe would also empower the private sector to make a substantial contribution in the Post-2015 era.
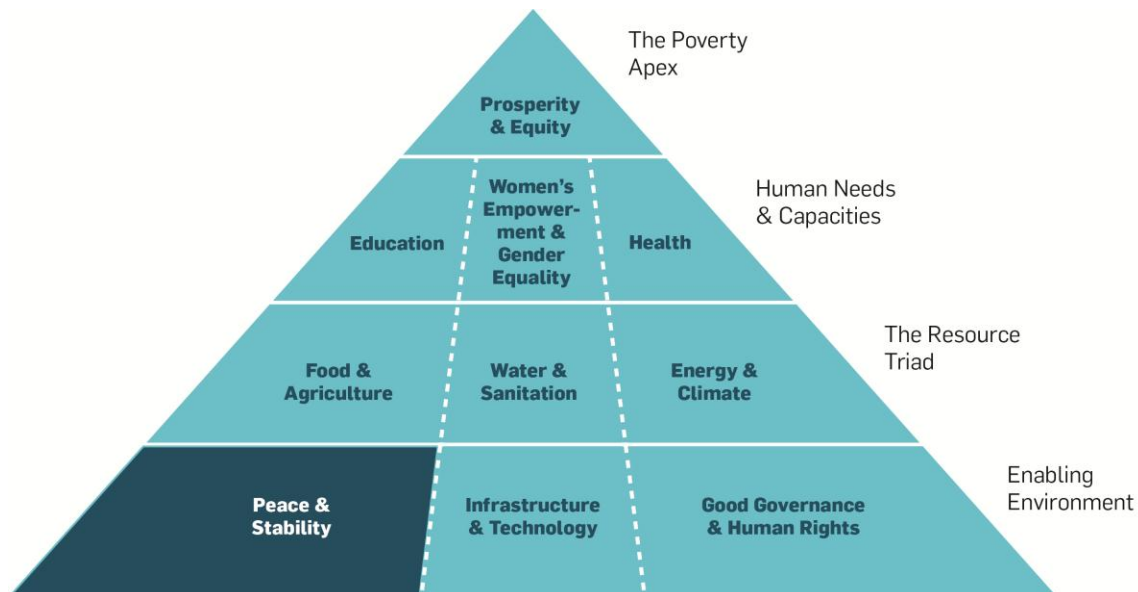
Source: Global Compact LEAD consultations

LEAD companies as well as participants in the UN Global Compact's Business for Peace initiative strongly support the inclusion of peace and stability in the Post-2015 agenda. The establishment of enabling

environments conducive to responsible investments and private sector participation in economic planning and policy-making are considered essential building blocks of any future global development framework, and a critical foundation for companies to contribute to the realization of sustainable development.

Further, they have proposed the achievement of peaceful and stable societies as a stand-alone goal and an integral element within the proposed ten goals. This goal and related targets are articulated as follows:

"**Goal 8: Build peaceful and stable societies**, *targets include*:
- Improve access for diverse ethnic, religious and social groups to justice, services and economic opportunity.
- Improve mediation, dispute resolution and dialogue mechanisms to prevent and resolve conflict and to build peace.
- Reduce incidence of violent deaths per 100,000 by at least 20 per cent.
- Prevent, combat and reduce the illict trade in small arms, light weapons and ammunition.
- Reduce the reach and extent of organized crime, especially through the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime."

The purpose of this issue paper is to inform governments and policy makers of the responsible business community's willingness to contribute to the formation of any goals on fair, peaceful and prosperous societies, as well as future implementation efforts involving the private sector.

Business Platforms for Action and Partnership

Violent conflicts are bad for business. Recognizing the damage that civil strife wreaks on societies and economies around the word, companies are looking at the means they have at their disposal to defuse social conflicts before they get out of hand or, in post-conflict situations, help to weave a strong social fabric leading to shared prosperity and stability. With the support and cooperation of the public sector, some key options include provision of basic needs such as water, shelter and food to uprooted citizens; engaging in development of infrastructure that responds to the needs of the entire spectrum of a national community; and promoting and respecting fair land rights.

Among these businesses there is recognition that true social stability is only possible when there is a general sense of inclusiveness, fairness and common purpose. The social responsibility agenda of the UN Global Compact and its core principles embracing UN positions on human and workers' rights, the environment, and combating corruption is an important contributor in this regard. Further, many of the elements that are integral to business operations – provision of job opportunities, workplaces in which individuals are evaluated on their skills and not ethnic background or belief systems, the capacity to keep goods and services in circulation even during times of disruption or duress, capital and resources to undertake socially necessary projects – are useful as vehicles for peace.

Launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2013, the UN Global Compact's Business for Peace platform involves companies that are engaging in learning, dialogue and collective action in the workplace, marketplace and community to advance peace—many of which are situated in conflict-affected or high-risk areas. Others, whether they are multi-nationals or not, recognize the negative global ramifications of high-intensity local conflicts, and are willing and able to bring their support.

Partners from civil society, academia and investment institutions are also welcome to participate in Business for Peace, as are the UN Global Compact's country-based Local Networks.

Alongside efforts conducted by key actors dedicated to galvanize business engagement and contribution to peace—including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), among others—the UN Global Compact and its members are actively committed to complement governmental efforts to build and maintain peace.

Key Driver: Public Policy and Enabling Incentives

In order to unlock the full potential of the private sector it will be critical to establish proper and effective enabling frameworks in terms of public policy.

Governments of countries where risks are rising are encouraged to engage in confidence building dialogues and interchanges, calling on business leaders as appropriate. In many conflict situations, business leaders are among those with most to gain from settlement of differences, and have resources that can be brought to bear in critical situations.

Public policy steps that can be taken to support an enabling environment for peace include:

- Improve the investment climate and increase private sector participation in economic planning and policymaking.
- Incentivize responsible investment through support of SMEs, microfinance entities, and availability of credit and affordability of debt.
- Involving international business investors by linking the public and private sectors and civil society, promoting investment facilities and risk coverage schemes to encourage private investments, and facilitating a better understanding of business opportunities in fragile countries.
- Establish a legal and regulatory framework conducive to responsible business and investment.
- Promote transparency and establish a predictable business environment through enhanced rule of law.

Accountability

In recent years, increasing numbers of companies are reinforcing sustainability efforts with public commitments in relation to accountability, responsibility, and transparency. To build trust and be considered a credible partner in the Post-2015 era, companies should be – and increasingly are – transparent about their social and environmental impacts, and need to be accountable for how their business activities create or deplete value for society and what they are doing to improve their performance.

Participants of the UN Global Compact have made public commitments to the Global Compact's ten principles and are required to report annually on their sustainability efforts through a Communication on Progress (COP) report. Businesses engaging with the UN Global Compact's Issue Platforms, such as Business for Peace, are also asked to additionally report on their efforts surrounding those particular issues.

Generally speaking, the UN Global Compact organizes its companies into three categories based on the level of COPs submitted. These levels – Learner, Active and Advanced – allow the UN Global Compact to encourage and challenge participants to use more sophisticated methodology and release more detailed COPs. Companies are increasingly rising to the challenge to report in a more advanced, detailed and transparent manner. This sort of accountability is crucial in instilling confidence in all stakeholders that companies are truly making meaningful progress towards global sustainability.

At the same time, companies are being encouraged to publicly commit to longer-range sustainability objectives and goals in order to better align their efforts and strategies in relation to the broad global sustainable development agenda.

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April 2014