

Ban stresses role of business in advancing sustainable development agenda



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (second right) addresses Global Compact Board Meeting

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today highlighted the critical role that businesses play in advancing sustainable development, and called for a surge in public-private partnerships ahead of a major United Nations conference on the issue next June.

“We need you. More than ever before, we need to develop a long-term vision for our planet,” Mr. Ban said in [remarks](#) prepared for the UN Global Compact Board luncheon, held in New York.

“A vision that not only relies on political will, but one that recognizes the critical role that business can and must play in advancing and ensuring sustainable development around the world,” he added.

A growing number of businesses have signed up to the Global Compact since it was set up in 2000, pledging to align their business practices to 10 universally accepted principles concerning human rights, labour, environmental sustainability and the fight against corruption. The Compact is the world’s largest corporate responsibility initiative with 6,000 companies in 135 countries.

The international community will gather at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in Brazil next June to chart a course towards a more sustainable and equitable world.

“In Rio, business cannot and must not be sidelined – it is a central partner, alongside governments, civil society and others,” noted Mr. Ban.

“If sustainable development is to become a reality, we need to unleash a wave of public-private partnership on a much bigger scale,” he added.

Addressing participants earlier in the day at the board’s last meeting for this year, Mr. Ban highlighted the Global Compact’s growth and evolution over the years, while also stressing the need to take the initiative to the next level.

“The initiative has matured. Today the challenge goes beyond having companies build the ten principles into their strategies and operations. We also want them to focus on the Compact’s second objective and become an active partner in the UN’s broader mission.

“Much of the Compact’s work focuses on forging public-private partnerships to address critical issues – from women’s empowerment to children’s rights to sustainable energy,” he noted.

Rio+20, he added, is a major opportunity for the Compact to bring such a partnership agenda to full scale.

“For you as board members, this means intensifying efforts in the coming months. By the time we meet in Rio, I hope that this board will reconstitute itself as a Global Compact partnership board, with the capacity to provide guidance on the rapidly evolving sustainable development agenda.

“We all know that corporate sustainability, as advanced by the Global Compact, is a critical building block to a more sustainable future,” he stated.

“Public-private partnerships have the potential to deliver truly transformational, systemic change. Many of the solutions and innovations already exist. At Rio, let us fully utilize this historic opportunity.”

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