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## Ban calls on more businesses to embrace UN-led initiative to empower women



9 March 2011 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today called on the business community to continue working alongside the United Nations to empower women and especially to help break the proverbial ‘glass ceiling.’

Last year the UN launched the [Women’s Empowerment Principles](#) – a set of seven steps companies can take to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community – as part of its broader campaign for empowerment and equality.

The steps include treating all women and men fairly at work; promoting education, training and professional development for women; and measuring and publicly reporting on progress to achieve gender equality.

As representatives from business, government, civil society and the UN [met](#) today to take stock of how the Principles have been put into practice and identify areas of improvement, Mr. Ban thanked those who joined the world body in its effort to ensure that women are treated fairly in their companies.

“When you embrace these principles, you join a great and gathering movement to unleash the power of women and change the world. This is critical,” he [told](#) the event in New York, co-hosted by the UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office, to mark the one-year anniversary of the Principles.

“We are making progress... but in too many countries and societies, women remain second-class citizens,” he added.

“Businesses have a tremendous reach. You have ideas. You have capital. You are innovators. By working together based on shared values, we can advance the common good.”

The Secretary-General noted that since last year, a number of companies that have embraced the Principles raised their targets for hiring women. Others realized that women-owned enterprises deserve equal chances to compete for procurement.

“I applaud the more than 160 companies that have signed on to the Principles. But we need thousands more to reach a real tipping point,” he stated.

“You have heard of the glass ceiling – the invisible barrier that stops women’s advancement. In some countries, in some fields and in some businesses, that barrier is not made of glass – it is made of iron,” Mr. Ban added.

“You can help change this. You can work with us to empower women. Together, we can shatter the iron ceiling.”

Today’s event was held on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day, observed worldwide on 8 March.

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