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UN chief urges more companies to embrace business sustainability ideals



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras

14 February 2012 –

[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today encouraged more businesses to embrace the principle of sustainability in their strategies, noting that with the most of the world's ecosystems in decline, widening social inequality and climate change, global prosperity, productivity and stability was at stake.

“We need corporate sustainability to be in the DNA of business culture and operations,” said Mr. Ban in his [address](#) to a gathering in New York entitled ‘KPMG Summit: Business Perspective for Sustainable Growth.’

Mr. Ban pointed out that corporate sustainability is currently not properly valued, noting that many proven innovations and solutions – from energy efficiency to emissions reductions – are not supported with the right incentives.

“In fact, incentive structures still tend to encourage unsustainable behaviour. As a result, too many companies limit their sustainability efforts to pilot programmes that never take off. Even worse, sustainability becomes more a matter of public relations than how companies operate,” he added.

He lauded the nearly 7,000 corporations in 140 countries that had joined the United Nations Global Compact initiative that seeks to foster responsible business practices.

Stressing the UN’s commitment to supporting companies to carry out their businesses in a sustainable way, Mr. Ban cited the UN-backed Principles for Responsible Investment that been embraced by more than 900 institutional investors representing at least \$30 trillion in assets.

Through the UN-backed “Principles for Responsible Management Education,” over 400 business schools and related institutions are integrating sustainability into curriculum and research, he said, adding that the recently issued report of his Global Sustainability Panel also provided a blueprint for mainstreaming sustainability.

Mr. Ban also highlighted the UN’s Sustainable Energy for All Initiative that is mobilizing the private sector towards a more accessible, efficient and clean energy economy, and the fact that more than 400 business leaders had pledged their support for the Caring for Climate initiative designed to advance low-carbon solutions and help make the green economy a reality, he said.

He urged business leaders gathered at the conference to five steps to advance sustainability:

Join the Corporate Sustainability Forum to be held on the sidelines of the UN Conference on Sustainable development in Brazil in June;

Heed the call of a new generation of investors by publicly reporting on sustainability performance;

Engage in responsible lobbying and advocacy to affirm their belief in free and fair trade;

Work with governments to adopt smart regulatory frameworks and incentives that reward environmental and social performance;

Work with the UN in its platforms and initiatives on sustainable business practices.

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