

Human rights: a Call to Action

Human rights: a Call to Action

Encouraging companies to commit to improve their reporting on Human Rights

What is the Call to Action?

The Call to Action is a challenge to companies to identify an area of their reporting on human rights that they want to improve in 2009. In responding to the Call to Action companies become part of a growing number of organizations seeking to take practical steps to integrate human rights issues into their policies and operations and thereby contribute to broader learning on how best to approach what can appear to be a complex subject.

The Call to Action is central to a new initiative led jointly by Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative (RR); the United Nations Global Compact (UN GC); and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Other networks interested in business and human rights are invited to join the Call to Action.

Why a Call to Action?

While respect and support for human rights has emerged as one of the key issues facing business, the quality of reporting on the subject is lower compared with other environmental and social topics.

There is a need to improve the quantity of reporting and help generate practical examples of how reporting can improve.

Improving reporting, however, requires two steps. First, there needs to be a will to focus on the issue and bring attention to it as an important part of any CSR or sustainability approach. Second, companies need more practical help and ideas in how best to approach reporting on this subject.

The Call to Action invites companies to participate in the process of generating ideas and practical examples of approaches to reporting which will be gathered in a report at the end of the project. In addition, there will be other activities to create more educational resources on the subject and a technical Working Group to develop recommendations around performance measurement and reporting.

How can I participate in the Call to Action?

To participate in the call, a company can take on one goal or many for improving the quality of their human rights reporting. Companies are also welcome to link their commitments to other initiatives or frameworks such as the UN GC's Communication on Progress.

Company commitments must:

- clearly indicate what the company intends to improve (see ideas in the list below), and
- set goals for when the report will be publicly available (e.g. in Sustainability Report 2008)

All company commitments must be received by 15 December 2008. RR, UN GC and the GRI will publish the commitments on the project website and will then publish the report when it is complete.

The project offers an opportunity for companies to both publicly demonstrate support for the issue and contribute to advancing a new field. Furthermore the project leaders will organize knowledge sharing opportunities for companies making a commitment.

What are examples of the types of improvements that could I commit to making?

Companies can improve their reporting on human rights in a number of ways, including, but not limited to:

- the coverage of human rights issues in their sustainability report;
- the depth of detail on the reporting;
- how they report.

The following list provides examples of potential commitments that companies can make. However, it is possible for companies to set other goals. The list below is illustrative.

Coverage of reporting

- Reevaluate the scope of the human rights reporting and disclose the reevaluation process.
- Address human rights issues and challenges for the first time in the report (e.g., child labor).
- Extend the boundaries of the report to address human rights performance for suppliers and customers.

Depth of reporting

- Describe a human rights management system and management responsibilities for the first time or expand the coverage of specific aspects of the system.
- Publish new quantitative data on human rights performance.
- Publish specific targets for reporting more quantitative information in future reporting periods.
- Cover more GRI G3 human rights indicators.

- Explain the linkages between company policies and practices with specific international conventions.

How to report

- add a specific section that discusses the relevance of human rights.
- Implement a stakeholder engagement process specifically on human rights and described the process and outcomes in detail in the report.
- Publish CEO / senior management commitment to improvement of human rights reporting with specific reference to areas of improvements and timeline.
- Publish targets for improving human rights reporting with specific implementation steps for internal management / measurement systems and timelines.
- Provide case studies of how human rights issues were addressed in a specific location, product/service, or community.

What are the next steps?

The timelines for making and reviewing commitments is as follows:

- Mid-September 2008: invitation sent to companies to make commitment
- 15 December 2008: deadline for companies to send commitments
- June 2009: new reports released (e.g. Annual or Corporate Responsibility Report, Sustainability Report, Communication on Progress, etc.)
- July 2009: compilation of examples

How can organizations other than companies participate in the Call to Action?

Other organizations are invited to join the three project leaders in calling on businesses to improve the quantity and quality of human rights reporting. Adding your support for the Call to Action can help build momentum around everyone's efforts to encourage integration of human rights concerns into daily operations. Organizations or networks interested in supporting the Call to Action are asked to engage with companies on the subject of human rights reporting and encourage them to make commitments to improve their reporting. You are also invited to signal your support for better reporting by expressing your support for the objectives of the Call to Action on the project website.

Contact:

For further information on this invitation, please contact one of the project leaders:

- GRI, Sean Gilbert (gilbert@globalreporting.org) or Bastian Buck (buck@globalreporting.org)
- UN GC, Oliver Johner (johner@un.org)
- RR, Scott Jerbi (scott.jerbi@eginitiative.org)

To make a commitment please contact Oliver Johner (johner@un.org / +1 (917) 367 8187) or Bastian Buck (buck@globalreporting.org / +31 (20) 5310016).

For further information on the project - Human Rights: A Call to Action – please visit:

<http://www.globalreporting.org/humanrights>