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# Children's Rights and Business Principles

Summary report: Global Release Event  
12 March 2012, London



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UNICEF, the United Nations Global Compact and Save the Children (the sponsoring organizations) hosted a global release event for the Children's Rights and Business Principles (the Principles) on 12 March 2012, in London. The 10 Principles set out concrete actions for business to respect and support children's rights.

The event was attended by more than 160 invitees from business and civil society, the objective being to provide a comprehensive introduction to the Principles, illustrating their practicality and broad relevance with examples of business practice from across the globe.

The Principles are the culmination of an international consultation launched by the sponsoring organizations on 24 July 2010, at the United Nations Global Compact Leaders' Summit. At the global release, the final document was well received by the audience; speakers throughout the release event acknowledged the efforts to incorporate critical perspectives from the consultations.

This report summarizes the key themes and discussions from the global release event. Following the opening and introductions, the event was structured around four main panels. The first panel focused on Principle 1 and the management processes required for integrating respect and support for children's rights. Subsequent panels focused on how business can respect and support children's rights in the workplace, the marketplace, and the community and environment. The final session of the day offered a recap of the discussions.

Materials relating to the consultation process, the global release event, the press release and the video statement by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the launch of the Principles can be accessed at <http://www.business-human-rights.org/ChildrenPortal/CRBP>, and at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuOyJ--d3eg&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuOyJ--d3eg&feature=youtu.be).

## OPENING AND INTRODUCTIONS

Paul Hohnen, sustainability consultant and master of ceremonies, opened the event. He began by noting that one measure of the greatness of a society was how children are treated, and that an investment in children is the best and purest form of investment a society can make for its future. Although there were no media present at the event, he noted that the event will be recorded on video and there will be a forthcoming report.



Hohnen's opening remarks were followed by a video statement from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who said: "When it comes to children, we all need to do more. That is why I welcome the launch of the Children's Rights and Business Principles ... the Principles provide the first comprehensive framework for business to consider their impact on the rights and well-being of children. They set out steps that all businesses can take to integrate child rights into their operations."

Leila Pakkala, Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, UNICEF, thanked all those who had contributed to developing the Principles. She underscored that the Principles are based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and are aligned with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. Children represent one third of the world's population, she pointed out, and deprivation and violation of children's rights during these formative years could have irreversible impacts. Pakkala stressed that current sustainability debates miss the perspective of children as crucial stakeholders of business in their roles as "...consumers, family members of employees, young workers, future employees and business leaders, and as citizens in the communities and environments in which business operates. Business – whether large or small – therefore inevitably interacts with and affects the lives of children in direct and indirect ways."

Elisabeth Dahlin, Secretary General, Save the Children Sweden, described the extensive consultation process that was used to develop the Principles. Representatives of more than 600 business, civil society, government and academic entities participated in face-to-face consultations in 11 countries, as well as through online consultations. The process included consultations with more than 2,000 children in nine different countries. Dahlin emphasized that the Principles are about integrating children's rights in businesses' core operations and within their spheres of influence. "Corporations can together with other actors make changes in their spheres of influence, as well as influencing governments, and make an enormous difference in the lives of children."

Georg Kell, Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact, stated that these Principles are innovative: "For the first time, there are standards that embody what business can do to both respect and support children's rights." He described this as the next generation of principles. Kell also remarked that there was a growing corporate awareness of the business case for respecting and supporting human rights; for example, by building long-term value across the supply chain and as a tool for risk management. He stressed that many challenges cannot be solved by any single stakeholder and that there is thus the need for collaboration – and that the Principles add a valuable new lens for corporate sustainability, and for business and human rights discourse.



## PANEL 1. Principle 1 – Principles in practice

Principle 1 defines the actions business must take to integrate respect for children's rights in all business practices. The definition of 'respect' is based on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights framework. As with the Guiding Principles, it calls on business to implement three core actions to meet the corporate responsibility to respect -policy commitment, due diligence and remediation – but articulates these actions from a child rights perspective. Principle 1 also encourages business to commit to support children's rights, through voluntary actions that seek to advance human rights, especially in collaboration with other societal actors.

The panel was moderated by Charlotte Ersbøll (Novo Nordisk) and included Mark Makepeace (FTSE), Richard Gillies (Marks and Spencer), Steve Howard (Ikea) and Sun Ruizhe (China National Textile and Apparel Council).

### Good practice examples provided by the speakers

**Novo Nordisk: Insulin to prevent childhood diabetes** – Novo Nordisk has sought to understand and address the impact of diabetes on children. In the United States, for example, 1 in 3 children – and 1 in 2 children in some ethnic groups – are expected to develop the lifestyle-related type 2 diabetes during their lifetime. What can be done to prevent the next generation from living shorter lives than our own? In sub-Saharan Africa, children with childhood diabetes (type 1 diabetes) die within a year of developing the disorder due to lack of access to insulin and awareness. Novo Nordisk considers activities that can incorporate both a respect element of responsible behaviour (free insulin and improved treatment conditions for children with diabetes) and a support element (advocating for and supporting a healthy lifestyle early in life for children at risk of diabetes).

**FTSE Group: Development of the FTSE4Good Index** – Throughout its 10-year journey, the FTSE4Good initiative has sought to hold a mirror up to the corporate world to reflect how companies are performing – not just financially but also socially, environmentally and in terms of governance, and including a number of child-related metrics. Research has suggested that this process and the increased engagement of investors have helped accelerate actions for sustainability. During the next year, FTSE will commission its partner EIRIS to research a sample of 100 global companies, those included in the FTSE4Good Global 100 index, to see how they have embedded the Principles. This will have three benefits: It will provide a 'line in the sand' to show year-one status of corporate practice; it will stimulate improvements by creating awareness within these companies; and it will start the process of creating metrics on the Principles that the investment community can use.

**IKEA: Children are the most important people** – IKEA is a values-driven company, and seeing children as the most important people in the world is at the core of its engagement. This means viewing the world from a child’s perspective. IKEA retail operations are child- and family-friendly; children are welcome, for example, to play everywhere in its stores, even jump on or sleep in the beds. IKEA products put children first, prioritizing safety and not using harmful substances, while seeking to promote children’s development, with child development experts helping to achieve this. IKEA’s approach to child labour requires all suppliers to comply with IWAY, its supplier code of conduct. IKEA is working through its entire supply chain – from factory to field – taking an industry-wide approach to help eliminate and address the root causes of child labour. Since the mid-1990s, IKEA has worked in partnership with Save the Children and UNICEF to support education and health care programmes in India’s cotton-producing and carpet-making villages. Another example of its focus is support to migrant workers’ families in China, helping parents spend more time with their children and other family members. The annual global Soft Toys for Education campaign helps support education for children in Africa, Asia and Europe.

**Marks and Spencer: Plan A** – Marks and Spencer is committed to including a child’s point of view in its corporate social responsibility work, for example, by removing artificial colours and flavours initially from children’s food and now from all its foods. In the support realm, the company has explored such issues as family-friendly working hours and social investments.

**China National Textile and Apparel Council: Listening to young workers** – The China National Textile and Apparel Council recently conducted research on young and migrant workers in China, where there are six million young people working in the textile industry. The study used a participatory methodology that sought to understand the needs and perspectives of young workers, especially young migrant workers, and how as a business the textile sector could help support and motivate them.

## Discussion

During discussions, there were comments on the differences and values of voluntary initiatives as opposed to regulatory measures and the importance of ensuring that voluntary initiatives do not undermine government policies and actions. Georg Kell noted that voluntary and regulatory actions can complement each other, and both are important to effectively uphold children’s rights. In the same spirit, the Principles help reinforce and complement government action to ensure respect and support of children’s rights by business.

*“Sustainability is most fundamentally about making the world a better place for the next generation. These Principles are therefore at the very heart of sustainability.”*  
– **Charlotte Ersbøll,**  
Novo Nordisk

*“Children are one third of the population today, but children are 100 per cent of our future customer base, employees.”* –  
**Richard Gillies,**  
Marks and Spencer

## PANEL 2. Children's rights in the workplace

Principles 2, 3 and 4 articulate how businesses can respect and support children's rights in the workplace and company facilities. These Principles address issues of child labour, young workers and family-friendly work environments, as well as issues of child protection and safety in all business activities and facilities.

The panel was moderated by Paul Hohnen (sustainability consultant) and Included Sebastián Escarrer Jaume (Meliá Hotels International), Else Hovind Hendel (Norges Bank Investment Management), Maritha Lorentzon (H&M) and Simon Steyne (ILO-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour).

Simon Steyne provided a comprehensive briefing on international standards with regard to child labour and young workers, and clarified different age limits based on national and international standards: There is not one minimum age but different minimum ages for light work, non-hazardous employment or worst forms of child labour. Because youth unemployment is a serious problem that can fuel social unrest, there needs to be a nuanced approach – and a blanket policy of not employing children under age 18 may not be the best solution. Decent work opportunities for young workers above the minimum age for employment are an important contribution that businesses can make to children's rights and society. Steyne also emphasized that business action beyond the workplace can have important consequences for tackling such issues as child labour. For example, paying taxes –an element in Principle 10 – helps ensure that governments have sufficient resources for services, including education, and for labour standards enforcement.

### Good practice examples provided by speakers

**H&M: Addressing the root causes of child labour** – H&M uses a code of conduct and audits to address the risk of child labour in its own supply chain. As an innovative example of trying to understand and address the root causes of child labour, H&M encouraged the Government of Turkey to raise the compulsory schooling age. This had been previously set at age 12, and had been a key contributing factor to the higher incidence of child labour. Many children, who left school at such a young age, had few alternatives but to start working. H&M also recognizes that the risk of child labour increases further upstream in the supply chain, where cooperation and partnership with, for example, governments, organizations, and other brands become essential to address the risk.

**Meliá Hotels International: Protecting children from sexual exploitation** – One of the biggest human rights challenges facing the tourism industry is the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Statistics show that some 150 million girls and 73 million boys have been sexually exploited. Meliá has invested in training approximately 35,000 employees on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and has taught them how to take appropriate action when they suspect such instances. Its leadership seeks to advocate and influence other companies to sign the code



on sexual exploitation, and is working with government to promote action.

Meliá stressed the importance of critical mass and the need to work with others to achieve real changes.

### **Norges Bank Investment Management: Expectations on children's rights –**

The mandate of Norges Bank is to safeguard assets for future generations, and it has been working since 2006 on child rights issues. From a financial perspective, ignoring children's rights presents a risk to the long-term value of the fund.

Norges Bank annually reviews the disclosure of a selection of the companies it is investing in against its criteria in expectations on children's rights. The results are used to engage business to improve performance with regard to children's rights.

### **Discussion**

The value of social dialogue as a crucial tool in ensuring respect and support for children's rights in the workplace was emphasized. The vast majority of child labour is in the informal sector, and will thus tend to be further down in the supply chain of many firms. It may be missed by efforts that are focused on either the first tier of entities within a business's supply chain or only on major suppliers. A more impactful, efficient and cost-effective approach is to allocate resources commensurate with the risk of abuses to human rights, including children's rights. This may call for less focus on the first-tier or major suppliers and more attention to entities further down the supply chain.

Business actions in other areas, such as paying taxes and providing decent work opportunities in the formal economy for parents and caregivers, are also important ways to tackle child labour. Sectoral initiatives and other forms of collective action were mentioned as important components of a comprehensive solution to child labour, and the value of working with local authorities and governments was also emphasized. The impacts of buyer policies and practices on labour conditions in the supply chain were noted, including that there is sometimes a conflict between buyer corporate responsibility/sustainability policies and procurement practices. The latter can undermine implementation of the former.

The panel also discussed metrics to measure the impact of businesses on children's rights. Examples discussed in relation to child labour include: the number of children employed; the number of children who are given the opportunity to enrol in school; and the number of parents who receive information on child rights and the importance of education. Some speakers noted that metrics was indeed one of the gaps that needed to be addressed and that businesses need better indices to measure impact. It was suggested that organizations such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) offer mechanisms for business to report current policies and practices regarding children. The fourth generation update of the GRI framework could be a valuable opportunity to ensure that the Principles are more comprehensively reflected.

## **PANEL 3. Children's rights in the community and environment**

Panel 3 focused on Principles 7–10, which cover how business should respect and support children as part of their shared community and environment. Key themes include environmental and resource-use strategies, security arrangements, emergencies, and supporting government and civil society efforts to fulfil children's rights.

The panel was moderated by Eva Halper (Credit Suisse) and included David Schofield (Aviva Investors), Cecilia Rena (Arcor Group) and Fleur Hudig (ING).

### **Good practice examples provided by the speakers**

**Aviva:** Street to School programme – Aviva is committed to championing the rights of children who live on the streets, particularly their right to education. Because these children often live outside formal societal systems, they do not reap the benefits of interventions focused on child rights. Philanthropy is an important contribution, but business must also harness its core operations and networks of employees, customers and stakeholders to create a positive impact. At Aviva, for example, the corporate responsibility and marketing departments collaborate to increase visibility and awareness around child rights issues in Aviva campaigns. Through partnership with the Consortium for Street Children and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Aviva is using its influence with much broader societal actors.

**ING: Support for education** – In 2005, ING started its Chances for Children programme to increase children's access to quality education. ING stressed that it is key to find the right niche where the business can have an impact and also be rewarding and a huge motivator for employees. Employees have supported the programme through raising awareness and funds.

**Arcor Group: Business for Children** – Arcor Group's corporate social responsibility approach has a strong focus on children. One example of this is Arcor's work in the communities near its factories and the programmes engaging its supply chain, such as the project aimed at preventing child labour. Arcor also plays a fundamental role as an advocate and promoter to involve and ensure the participation of other stakeholders to change values and create awareness of children's rights. It emphasizes the importance of working with all stakeholders and of going beyond social investment practices – by formalizing the commitment to children into the company's policies, involving senior management, and including children's rights in existing management systems, as well as employee performance evaluations and reporting.

## Discussion

Many companies have made children a focus of their community engagement and investment. The greatest opportunities may be where businesses align community initiatives with their company mission, values and expertise. Working with partners with robust child rights expertise was emphasized. Seeing children not just as a vulnerable group but as change agents and important stakeholders in their own and society's welfare is important in designing community initiatives. Understanding the role of business was underscored, with the point made that the contributions of business should complement, not be a substitute for, the role of government.

*“Childhood is the mirror in which society can see its own future.” –  
**Cecilia Rena,**  
Arcor Group*



## PANEL 4. Children's rights in the marketplace

Respecting and supporting children's rights through products and services, as well as marketing and advertising, were discussed in Panel 4.

The panel was moderated by Lord Michael Hastings (KPMG) and included Keith Weed (Unilever), Mai Oldgard (Telenor) and Jeroo Billimoria (Child and Youth Finance International).

### Good practice examples provided by the speakers

**Unilever: Marketing to children** – As part of its commitment to responsible marketing, Unilever was one of the first companies to apply its global Food and Beverage Marketing Principles to the marketing and advertising of its food and beverage products. The Principles include restrictions for marketing foods and beverages at children. Additionally, in order to ensure that Unilever advertising does not promote 'unhealthy' slimness, all brand directors and agencies are expected to use models and actors with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of between 18.5 and 25 as a guideline. This is in line with United Nations' guidance of the level of BMI that can be considered healthy.

**Telenor: Children's rights and mobile communication** – Mobile communication has the power to change children's lives positively but can also make them more vulnerable. Telenor Group is working to find a balance between the two. One example is Short Message Service (SMS) and voice messaging facilities that can provide health information services to pregnant women and mothers. This approach is being piloted as part of the public-private partnership Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA) in Bangladesh. A recent study conducted by the Boston Consultant Group (BCG) on behalf of Telenor shows that under-5 mortality in Bangladesh may be reduced by 30 per cent through the use of mobile health solutions.

Telenor also has initiatives to address safe Internet use for children, including a campaign that tours schools to create awareness of digital bullying in Norway. Through this campaign, 70,000 children have participated in interactive, dilemma-based training on how to behave online, and teachers and parents are empowered to get involved and prevent digital bullying.

**Child and Youth Finance International: Financial products and services for children** – Child and Youth Finance International advocates with banking and financial services to develop more services and products accessible to children, especially poorer children. Through experience, the founder determined that microfinance solutions reaching youth were actually creating more expensive alternatives to the formal banking sector. As an alternative, the organization advocates that children from age 10 should be able to access formal banking. This helps develop financial skills and achieves the primary objective of learning how to save money, water and electricity – leveraging children's role as change agents, which in turn benefits development and sustainability.

## Discussion

Products, services and marketing were seen as an enormous opportunity to support children's rights, but also a challenging area with regard to respecting children's rights. Industry standards were seen as very important. Engaging with child rights experts and other relevant stakeholders was reiterated as essential in ensuring that impacts on children would be positive and not negative. Some participants had different views on whether voluntary standards or regulatory approaches to marketing were preferable; others stressed the complementarity of both approaches.



## Recap and conclusion

The last session of the event was a round-up by the moderators of the gaps, dilemmas and missing links in the day's discussions. The floor was also open to questions and comments from participants.

### Discussion

The main challenge identified was the mainstreaming of the issue of business and children's rights. How to promote adoption of the child rights framework and promote implementation of the Principles by the broader business community, beyond those present during the event? The upcoming country launches were considered significant in this respect. It was also noted that the alignment of the Children's Principles with the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights made implementation easier for companies, as they could use the same processes and mechanisms established.

The need to engage small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to implement the Principles was emphasized. Smaller businesses may face different challenges from those of large global corporations and have fewer resources available to them. It is thus important to think how SMEs can work with the Principles in a way that is practical for them.

There was further discussion of how to best allocate resources for managing risks to children's rights in the supply chain. Participants reiterated the need to focus resources according to where the risk existed in the supply chain, rather than on the tiers that were closest to the company. The need to protect children as consumers was mentioned. Wherever production or consumption is occurring, children's rights need to be respected and supported, whether that is in developing countries, emerging markets or the global North.

Corporate sustainability is about more than philanthropy, but philanthropy is still valuable and needed. Among other things, it provides important resources to help development and civil society organizations help communities directly. Addressing child labour must "move from a sectoral and supply chain approach to a community-based approach." The value of community-based approaches to tackling child labour was mentioned.

The fact that the Principles are not just another set of boxes to be checked that corporations will have to include in their policy manuals, but are a guiding force to implement changes in practice was mentioned by a number of participants. The Principles were seen as providing an important new lens on corporate responsibility and sustainability. It was suggested that they offer a welcome new perspective that can help motivate managers and workers to greater levels of implementation.

The value of partnership and other forms of collective action in advancing children's rights was emphasized. Many issues relevant to business and children's rights are

made more complex by social issues such as poverty and discriminatory attitudes that one actor alone cannot overcome. Engaging with child rights experts is crucial in ensuring that business activities and business relationships more generally, as well as action to respect and/or support children’s rights specifically, do not have unintended negative consequences for children.

Core business approaches, strategic social investment and philanthropy, public policy and advocacy, partnership and other forms of collective action were all recognized as important complementary actions that business can take to respect and support children’s rights. A number of business representatives noted that their companies were already reviewing how to integrate these Principles and a child rights perspective to enhance their corporate sustainability efforts.



## Conclusion

Paul Hohnen summarized the day's discussions by noting key messages that emerged on how the Principles may be transformed into practice by businesses:

- Identify which risks and opportunities that are relevant to children's rights apply to your own business.
- Integrate respect and support for children's rights into the organization's policies.
- Implement these policies throughout the company and the supply chain.
- Inform and communicate progress to stakeholders.
- Interact with partners to achieve the goals of respecting and supporting children's rights.
- Inspire others to act upon the Principles.

The concluding remarks were given by Jasmine Whitbread, CEO, Save the Children International, and Richard Morgan, Director of Policy and Planning, UNICEF.

The speakers thanked everyone involved in organizing the event, including volunteers, the participants of the consultation processes, those involved in the multi-stakeholder reference groups, the speakers of the day, the moderators and the participants.

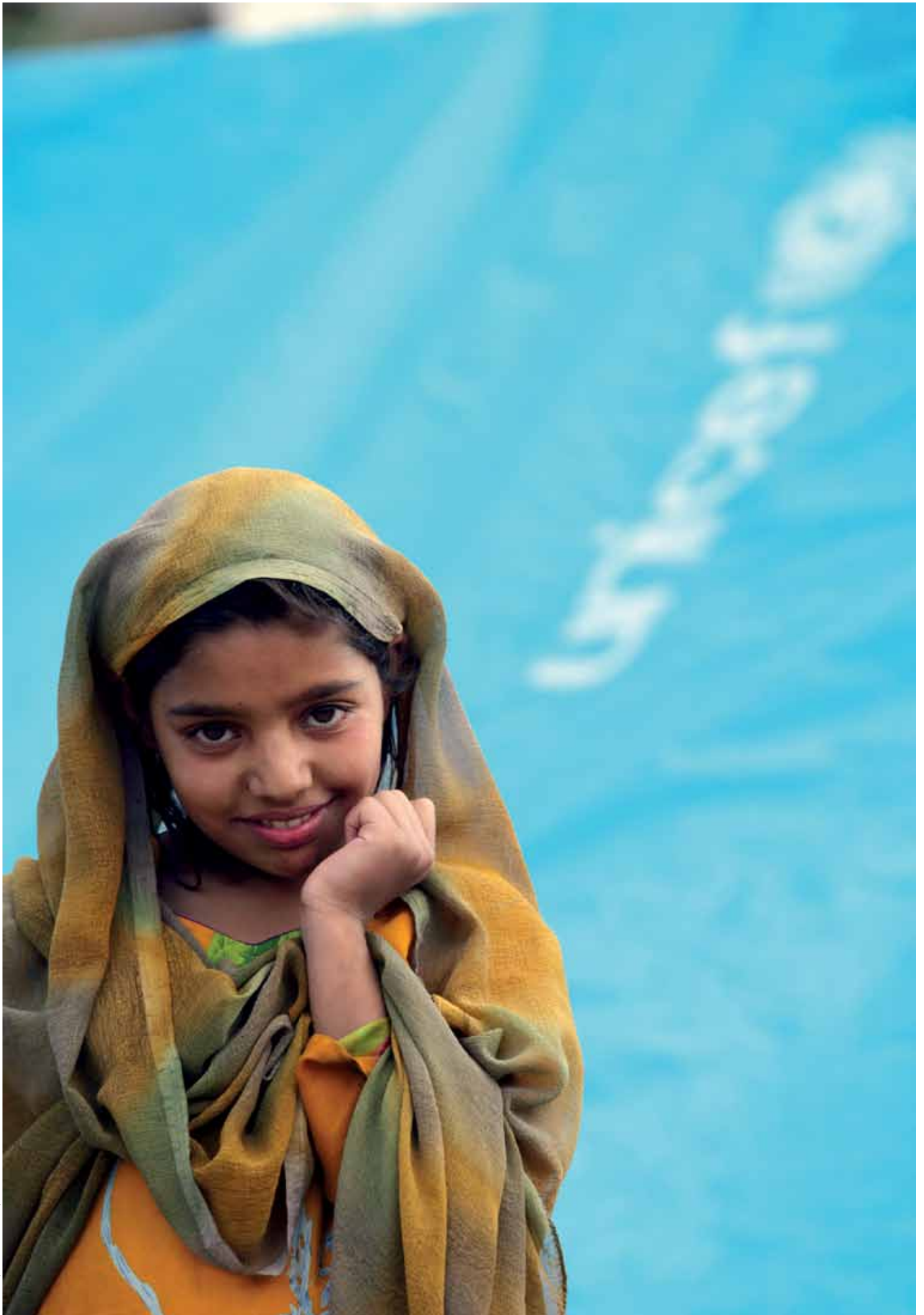
Ursula Wynhoven, General Counsel, United Nations Global Compact, provided an outline of follow-up actions planned by the sponsoring organizations. Among other actions, she noted, they will continue to promote these Principles and raise awareness. National and regional events are already planned in more than 40 countries.

*"I think this [the Children's Principles] is the missing piece of the jigsaw... I came here thinking oh no, I don't need another set of 10 principles. But I am going away thinking that actually this could be the core to encapsulate... and help drive change in all other aspects of sustainability as well."*  
– **David Ford**,  
Alfa Laval.

The sponsoring organizations will also develop and promote the use of tools, guidance and initiatives to aid in implementation, and they will collect and disseminate examples of implementation. They will identify opportunities for cross-sector dialogue, such as events, webinars and online forums, and they will seek to work with, for example, existing reporting frameworks, and indices to promote the implementation of the Principles.

Finally, the sponsoring organizations will encourage and support government efforts to provide an enabling environment for business regarding respect and support for children's rights. A number of business representatives noted that their companies were already reviewing how to integrate these Principles and a child rights perspective to enhance their corporate sustainability.





# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS and BUSINESS PRINCIPLES

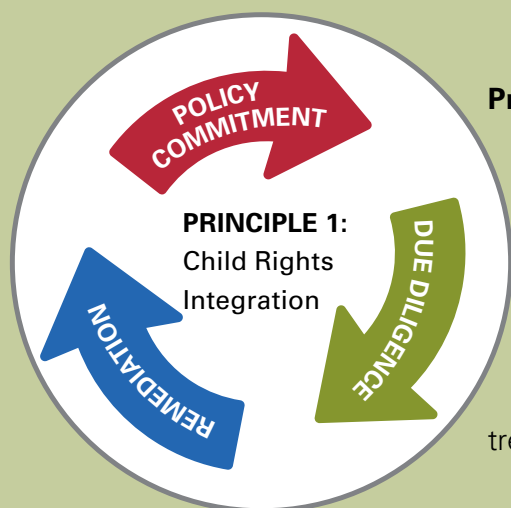
Children's rights are an essential investment in our sustainable future. Human rights apply to all children. Safeguarding these rights helps build the strong, well-educated communities that are vital to creating a stable, inclusive and productive business environment.

A business that integrates respect and support for children into its strategy and operations generates benefits for children, society; and can generate real benefits for business as well. Positive action for children's rights can build reputations, improve risk management and enhance the social licence to operate – including gaining and maintaining the support of the people who live and work where the business is conducted. A commitment to children can also help recruit and maintain a motivated workforce. For example, by supporting employees in their roles as parents and caregivers, and promoting youth employment and helping to ensure that the next generation has the skills a business needs to prosper – these are some of the concrete steps that a business can take.

**The Children's Rights and Business Principles** identify a range of actions that all business should take to respect children's rights – to prevent and address any adverse impact on children's human rights, as well as measures all business is encouraged to take to help support and advance children's rights. It recognizes the tremendous positive power of businesses large and small, and seeks to promote the best business practices. The principles call on the entire business community around the world to evaluate their impact on the rights of children; and to take action to make a difference for children.

## ACTIONS FOR BUSINESS

Ten principles identify actions for all businesses to respect and support children's rights.



**Principle 1** outlines three core actions to be taken to achieve this corporate responsibility to respect children's rights – **policy commitments, due diligence** measures and **remediation**.

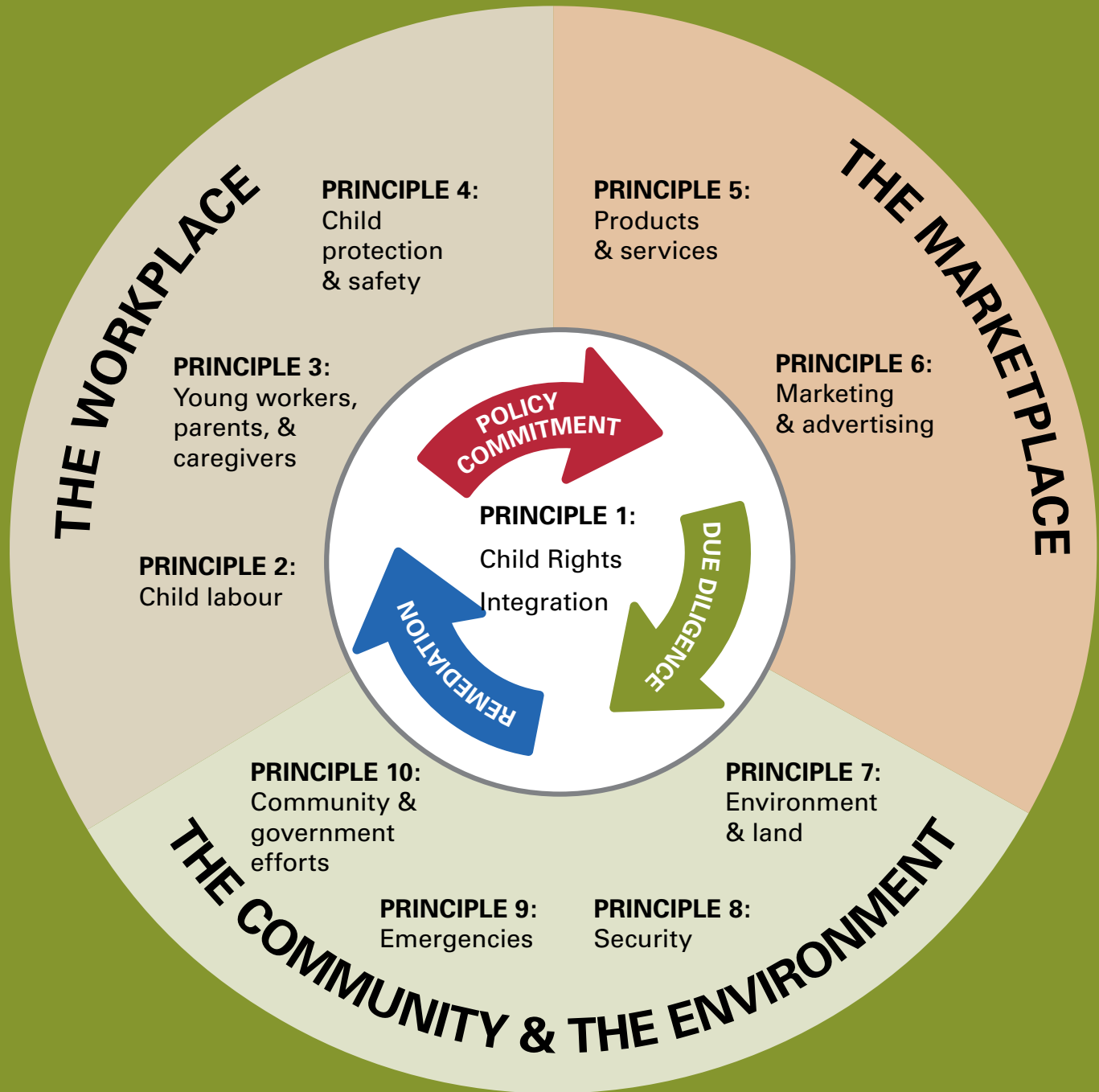
It also encourages all businesses to go beyond respect for children's rights to the next steps of supporting and promoting children's rights. These actions are based on four basic principles of children's rights – survival and development; concern for their best interests; participation and freedom of expression; and equal treatment regardless of their status such as race, gender or disability.



The Children's Rights and Business Principles were developed in consultation with business experts, child rights experts, civil society, governments and children. Save the Children, UNICEF and the United Nations Global Compact hope they will serve as an inspiration and guidepost for all businesses, everywhere, in their interactions with children.

The remaining nine Principles encourage business to implement these core actions by considering the impact on children of all their activities and their relationships related to the workplace, marketplace, community and the environment.

The principles can be mapped for action in:



# All business should →→→

# 1

Meet their responsibility to respect children's rights and commit to supporting the human rights of children

# 2

Contribute to the elimination of **child labour**, including in all business activities and business relationships

# 3

Provide decent work for **young workers, parents and caregivers**

# 4

Ensure the **protection and safety of children** in all business activities and facilities

# 5

Ensure that **products and services** are safe, and seek to support children's rights through them

# 6

Use **marketing and advertising** that respect and support children's rights

# 7

Respect and support children's rights in relation to the **environment and to land** acquisition and use

# 8

Respect and support children's rights in **security arrangements**

# 9

Help protect children affected by **emergencies**

# 10

Reinforce **community and government efforts** to protect and fulfil children's rights